

THE
DOCTRINAL INTEGRITY
OF
METHODISM

BY
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OF THE M. E. CHURCH, SOUTH.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE publisher of "MARVIN'S DOCTRINAL INTEGRITY OF METHODISM" requests me to write an "Introduction" to the book. With this request I the more readily comply because of my long and intimate personal relations with, and my very great esteem for, the lamented author; and also because I believe the book to be a very valuable contribution to the literature of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

This work first appeared in the form of a series of articles published in the *St. Louis Christian Advocate* in the year 1871; the series commencing July 19th and ending October 25th. From the work itself it is very evident that the author intended to produce a thorough and exhaustive treatise of the subject which he had in hand, and the publisher has certainly rendered an important service to the church by casting it in its present permanent form. That series of articles was too valuable to pass away with the ephemeral existence of a mere weekly newspaper publication. The subject had taken very deep hold upon the Bishop's mind, and had time permitted he desired to have it treated still more exhaustively. In the last of the series he says: "This series of articles must now come to a close short of the point which I had at one time in view. My tour of Conferences is at hand, and I shall have no opportunity for

writing except in a very desultory way. It was my purpose to give two or three articles on the work of the Spirit, but the very brief treatment of the most important doctrines connected with it given in the last number must suffice. The doctrine of justification by faith, also, I purposed to write of somewhat at length. Particularly, I intended to treat of the right of the church to adopt and enforce a 'creed' embodying vital doctrines of the Christian faith. But imperative duties forbid."

Thousands, who read with interest and profit the work as it first appeared in the *Advocate*, will now hail it in its present permanent form. For although our departed Bishop has not said to us all that he desired to say on the subject, yet what he has said is wonderfully adapted to the exigency of the times and will be of invaluable service especially to our young preachers in aiding them to resist the tide of error and unbelief that is sweeping over the land, and to maintain the Doctrinal Integrity of Methodism. The shifts and turns of modern infidelity and the pretended demonstrations of skeptical science are here met and exposed. The ancient landmarks of sound doctrine which are becoming increasingly obscure under the accumulated rubbish of modern opinion, are clearly defined and strongly affirmed.

I most heartily and earnestly commend the work to all lovers of sound doctrine.

W. M. RUSH.

BOONVILLE, MO., April 24, 1878.

THE
DOCTRINAL INTEGRITY OF METHODISM.

Chapter First.

UP to the spring of 1850 I had seen but a very few of the distinguished men of the Church. The reputation of such men as Bascom, Smith, Winans, Kavanaugh, and the Pierces, had excited a romantic interest in me. I was, therefore, quite excited with the expectation of visiting the General Conference in St. Louis that year. I had but two or three days to spend, but during that short time I saw and heard all that one man could.

The most impressive thing I heard was Dr. W. A. Smith's great speech on Lay Representation, a measure which he proposed and advocated at that time. To what extent that speech influenced the action of the Church, in 1866, I do not know. But there was a fact stated in it that I had not thought of before. I saw at once that it was a fact of great significance. It was this: That there had not been

a doctrinal schism in the Methodist Church. Its organic division and internal troubles, both in England and America, had originated from other causes. They had originated either from considerations of convenience, growing out of geographical relations, or from opposition to the form of government. In no case had there been the slightest trouble about doctrine.

Nor did the Doctor dread any trouble about our doctrine. He feared that if we failed to introduce lay representation into the General Conference, the time would come when there would be disaffection on that ground. But he anticipated schism from no other cause.

His views seemed eminently reasonable to me. Evangelical Arminianism appeared so thoroughly Scriptural and rational that I could not see that any vital differences were likely to arise. As against Calvinism, it asserts the universality of the Attainment and a conditional election, making the salvation of every man possible. As against the Pelagians, it asserts that "Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam, but is the corruption of the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually." As against the Uni-

versalists, it maintains the truth of our Savior's declaration, that the wicked "shall go away into everlasting punishment." As against Unitarians and Socinians, it proclaims the divinity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity, with the cognate doctrines of the expiatory and vicarious sacrifice of Christ, with the correlative postulate, the punitive justice of the Divine administration. As against philosophy, falsely so-called, it asserts the literal truth of the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, and everlasting life after death. As against all Ritualists, it holds the simplicity and spirituality of worship, and the subjective reality of the new birth.

All this is, to my mind, so plainly taught in Holy Scriptures, and withal so consonant with reason, and so satisfactory to the Christian conscience, that I am slow to believe that any heretical movement can become mischievous among us. I can not think that we are in danger of losing "the form of sound words," or suffering any schism on this account.

Yet, for some reasons, I am led to look to the foundations now with some degree of solicitude. We are living at a critical juncture of the world's history. There are times when the current of affairs becomes sluggish, and for a few generations there is scarcely a perceptible change. Then again, all at once, new ideas and new social forces start into ac-

tivity, and in ten years' time such changes take place that the world scarcely knows itself. Such was the case in Germany in Luther's time, and in England under Henry VIII. It would not be difficult to point out many other such epochs in the different countries and ages. No doubt that during the dull, quiescent periods things do move and get into new adjustments, but are so held in check by conservative obstructions that no decided progress is apparent. But at last the obstructed current swells to a volume too heavy for the conservative barriers that repress it. When they break before it, woe to anything that stands in the way of its headlong plunge.

I believe that in Christendom the movement of the ages is a true progress. But the channel is so tortuous and so gorged in places with the *debris* of the past, and with accumulations of falsehood and prejudice and depravity, that many times the current is forced backward, and so the movement is not always progress. There has been, oftentimes, alas for us, retrogression instead. Oftentimes, again, the stream overflows and, perforce, digs new channels for itself. In that case many a fair inheritance is swept away. Such are the hard conditions under which humanity, ignorant and depraved as it is, is able to go forward to better things, even with the help of the Incarnate Savior.

If my observation has not deceived me, we are even now in the midst of a movement as forceful and irregular as any in the past ages. There is always, in the very nature of these movements, cause of alarm. There is danger in them, even the best of them. Among the forces at work there is much depravity of thought and feeling. The movement is not always that of the wise Leader. Not unfrequently it is the raging of a blind demigod, roused by some chance to fury. There is much unwise demolition of structures that must be builded again.

If we are, then, in the midst of a new era of thought, if the great stream of history in Christendom has just started down a slant toward some new precipice, it becomes us well to study the elements and direction of the movement, and avert, as much as in us lies, the evil that may be in it. Much evil mixes itself in with the best movements, and some are almost wholly bad. He is a wise man who can, at all times, distinguish the tares from the wheat. For every Luther there must be a John of Leyden, and for every Latimer a Bonner. Licentiousness and despotism will balance each other.

Let us look around. What are the forces that are coming together now to coalesce with or to antagonize each other? Take American society as it is now. The ends of the earth are coming together here.

Many antagonisms are meeting. From Europe—Germany and Ireland especially—there are coming in two streams, one upon classification—that is, on the basis of religion. Superstition and unbelief are the two streams. They are diverse as the waters of the Missouri and Mississippi rivers, but henceforth they are in one channel, and must get along down the stream together somehow, mingled or distinct, as the forces present may determine. Along with these is the sound Protestant thought of the country.

Not to be despised among the elements of thought which affect faith, is Spiritism. Its appeal is made at once to that potent fact of consciousness, superstition, and to sensuality, which is as powerful in its influence as the other. Let no man suppose that the American people are too highly educated to be superstitious. No culture can furnish a guarantee against it. It is a depraved exercise of the faith-faculty. This faculty is in the very constitution of man, and must become active. If it turns away from the Christian Scriptures it must find some false object. Then its exercise is superstition. No grotesque extravagance need surprise us, even among the most cultivated people, when the objects of faith are left to the “natural selection” of a depraved heart.

As matter of fact the Spiritists are very numerous,

especially in those regions where “public schools” have held undisputed sway for so long a time. They publish several periodicals and cheap books. They support a number of lecturers, men and women, of no little wit. They carry on an active and formidable movement of propagandism. What the end is to be no man can tell. They strike at the very foundation of social order. All sorts of social and disorganizing views gravitate toward this diabolical center. In its relation to Christianity it is directly and intensely infidel.

Let us hope that Mormonism and Chinese Buddhism will never be appreciable elements of society on this continent. And yet, who knows that they will not?

Among the *social* elements coming into active force the chief are the doctrine of “woman's rights,” so-called, and Communism. The woman's movement assails, without any mincing or disguise—or at least many of its advocates do, and, logically, it comes to that—the Scriptural order as to domestic relations. A large proportion of its champions are infidels. The system itself is, logically, infidel and disorganizing. It is fatal to the existence of the family, and *that* is the corner-stone of all organization, both social and civil. Without the family the State goes to pieces, and anarchy takes possession

of the world. Then civilization itself becomes impossible. Loosen woman from her heaven-appointed and most beautiful orbit and everything goes to wreck. It is the charm of woman's modesty and purity that holds all society in its coherency. Analyze it and you will see that this is true. Woman's modesty and purity are the very heart of the social fabric. They form the center of gravitation, holding everything in its place.

Yet there are not wanting popular preachers, and influential dignitaries of the Church, who are urging this mad theory, and lending the influence of their character to coarsen women into a political hack, so that all the magnetism of her pure, high nature may be, if possible, destroyed. It is not the first time that professed ministers of religion have volunteered to do devils' work. But, as I have intimated, there is an irresistible drift toward infidelity in all this business, and many of the women engaged in it are already debased. One of the most fatal features of it is that those women who have the credit of being virtuous wink at the base characters who volunteer to help on the movement. In some quarters the tendency of this movement to destroy the distinction between vice and virtue is already apparent.

Yet the movement has gained ground, and many believe that it is still gaining. Whereunto it may grow who can tell?

Communism is Radicalism in its final form. Its historical antecedents are the leveling doctrines of the French infidelity of the eighteenth century, imported by Jefferson, Franklin, and Paine, into this country, and popularized by them and others during our revolt against the mother country. These doctrines were taken up and pushed forward upon the line of their inevitable logic by the Radicals and fanatical Abolitionists of this country, until they embroiled the nation in a horrible civil war. And the momentum of the movement, if I see clearly, is still increasing. We have seen its last bloody work in Paris. Thoughtful men, in the more populous regions of our country, dread the development of the next five years. For this Radicalism, Abolitionism, Communism, whichever you may choose to call it, is also called by another name—Agrarianism. It is a war on all distinctions. It is the last term of its syllogism, the first being this: All men are created equal.

Communism, too, is, in the essence of it, infidel, for it assails the very foundation on which religion is built. It contemns authority, despises dignities. It is the antagonist of order, for distinctions are essential in the very idea of order, and religion rests on order.

It has the popular advantage now of having car-

ried on a successful war in this country, and, by one of those delusions that are inevitable among the masses, who, educate them as you may, can never have insight sufficient for discrimination, has the credit of being loyal, and of supporting order and law. In the unseen forces that do the world's work always below the surface, with this popular delusion to hasten the issue, Radicalism is undermining other structures that, when they fall, will bury many who helped on the work and knew not what they did.

Over and against this Communistic movement is the rapid and enormous accumulation of capital by individuals and corporations. As population and the resources of the country increase, commercial enterprise will, in many cases, meet with still larger success, and corporations and monopolies become yet more enormously wealthy. This will aggravate the spirit of Communism. There was a great deal of honest fanaticism in the Abolitionist excitement, but in multitudes of cases it took its highest temper and keenest edge from envy of the Southern gentleman living on his princely estates in ease and splendor, made rich by the labor of his vassals. In like manner the honest views of Communist dreamers take a spice of bitterness in sight of the palace and the glittering equipage of the great manufacturer, the great merchant, the great bondholder, and the great banker.

Unfortunately there is much of evil and wrong in those things upon which the Agrarian makes war. Wealth is, in many cases, pompous and arrogant. Rich men do, not unfrequently, take advantage of the power money gives them for purposes of extortion. Corporations influence legislation to increase their monopolies by a corrupt use of money. Labor is often put at a disadvantage by them. But the Communist is blind to two things. The first is, that evil is inherent in human life and affairs ; and the second, that the evils inherent in this theory are much greater than even in the institutions he assails.

Already there are Communist organizations in many of the Eastern cities. They hold public meetings, and are bold and outspoken. Politicians begin to court them. They are in earnest, and the country will be agitated by them from one end to the other. I can conceive conditions, not unlikely to arise, in which they may involve the country in a war in which religion will play a part.

I mention these matters for this purpose : to show that there is a fevered condition of the public mind, and a consequent tendency, a very strong one, to extreme views. The imaginings of men are dis-tempered. The antagonisms of the day aggravate the tendency.

Chapter Second.

I HAVE given several facts showing an unhealthy condition of thought in many quarters, and a strong tendency to new and extreme opinions in questions of vital import. The facts given do not cover the ground. The instances in which thought is drifting from its moorings are numerous, and the movement is found more in matters connected with religion than any other. It looks, moreover, to a lax interpretation in doctrine, and an indulgent construction in questions of self-denial and duty. One of the immediate effects is that the religious consciousness is less intense.

A very notable instance of this is apparent in the habits of the people with respect to the observance of the Sabbath day. A great change has been wrought by the influx of immigrants from the continent of Europe. It is fully within my recollection that a Christian man would have been held as a violator of the Sabbath if he had gone or sent for his mail-matter on that day. Fifteen years ago very few church members, within my knowledge, took

the Sunday papers. Nor can I doubt that much that is deepest and most commanding in Christian sentiment goes along with strict views of the sanctity of the Lord's day, and with the strict consecration of it to his service.

Before the civil war, or, rather, before the agitations that led to it, a strong and wholesome conservatism restrained all ecclesiastics and ecclesiastical bodies from intermeddling with political affairs. Since that time the nation has become familiar with the names of clerical hotspurs vociferously leading the charge in every partisan foray. I forbear, at present, to point out the inevitable practical tendency of this state of things. That it will intensify and embitter political strifes and foment yet other wars I can not question, but I introduce it here only as an instance of vital and most significant change going on—of an irregular and radical movement of thought in the country. What had long been held to be sacred and inviolable boundaries are crossed without compunction. A vaulting, ambitious spirit is abroad, intensely revolutionary in its impulses and reckless in its methods and expedients.

A few successful men, who, by a daring, dashing manner in the pulpit, supported by a good deal of personal power, have acquired a national celebrity, are followed by a host of imitators whose only chance

of distinction lies in saying new and startling things, or adventuring upon some independent, dashing line of policy. A great deal of erratic and unhealthy thought gets afloat by this means. Fortunately, however, there is but little of it that has sufficient vitality or vigor to keep itself long on the surface. Most of it soon sinks out of sight, never agitating but a small circle, and that but for a moment.

A favorite field with many men of this class is the prophecies. A little activity of imagination, and a few months' reading in this line, will furnish a man with the requisite resources for sensational declamation. There has always been an unhealthy eagerness to lift the veil and pry into the future. No man can so charm the public ear as he who is able to assure his auditors from plain prophecy that great events are imminent—that fearful times are impending—that wars, or something worse than wars, are just at hand. If it be all set forth duly from behind a pair of most reverend and wise-looking spectacles, with elaborate computation of prophetic dates, and the tone and aspect of conviction and sincerity, its reception is secured. There is nothing that produces conviction like *figures*. Let a man get a few dates from Daniel and the Apocalypse, and a few mysteriously stated numbers, such as “the time, times and a half,” and fall to work on them with the four rudi-

mentary rules of arithmetic—addition, subtraction, multiplication and division—and you shall soon see many men convinced. There is an honest, matter-of-fact aspect about the Arabic numerals that we instinctively trust. They are our familiar acquaintances and tried friends. By their help we find out how much our wheat crop comes to when we sell it. They never deceive us. They tell us exactly the sum of this bill of dry-goods. And did not the lecturer on prophecy add and subtract just in the same way, with the same trusty numerals to guide the process and report the result?

For the most part these vagaries have a short run and do but little harm. But occasionally they agitate the Church for a considerable period and bring in a most unhealthy state, both of thought and feeling. Of all the delusions arising from this source, that of the Millenarians has been the most prevalent and the most damaging. From the earliest times until now there have been periodical revivals of this error, and always with the belief that the great event was just at hand.

Just now, within the last few years, it has started up afresh, and, unhappily, among men of fine talents and cultivation, and undoubted piety. Like all delusions, it is embraced with ardor and propagated with enthusiasm. The scholarly tone of the books

written in its defense, and the high character of the men who advocate it, secure respectful audience. There is a certain very intense type of piety—not the most exalted, perhaps, but very fervent and self-conscious—to which the personal reign of Christ among men, ruling the heathen with a rod of iron, would be very welcome. Possibly we expect to sit on his right hand and on his left hand in his kingdom. There is also another and higher type of piety that longs for his coming in the mere ardor of love, and thinks of little else than simply of being with him and seeing his face. It may be that in many such cases the only imperfection is a sensuous tinge. It is not the highest spiritual anticipation of the presence of Christ that is indulged. The halo about his person is not of pure, celestial light. There is somewhat of the vapor of earthiness in the medium through which he is contemplated. The color of the picture is the warmer and more palpable from this fact, and the effect on the sensibilities, may be, more acute.

The immediate precursor of the present Millenarian movement was Millerism. Miller's adherents were, as a class, far less respectable for intelligence than the Millenarians of the present day. Many of the most cultivated and earnest Christians of Europe and America are looking for the Lord to come at

almost any moment, and set up his throne on the earth. This expectation is a hot-bed out of which not only Christian love shoots into a quick and large development, but other and unhealthy sentiments also arise. Loose rein given to a fervid imagination is never safe. A disorganizing spirit already threatens to arise out of it in this case. It stands as another instance and another proof of the unbalanced and ill-regulated movement of thought on all sides.

I suppose there has been as much light cast upon the great problem of evil within these twenty-five years past as in all the ages preceding. But along with the sober, capable investigation has arisen a world of pretentious affectation of philosophical depth, which makes a blunder every time it undertakes to make an argument. Men of this class are confident and noisy in proportion to their incapacity. The influence of any one of them amounts to but little, but in the aggregate they constitute a very appreciable factor in the world of thought, and go to make up the sum of irregular and sinister activities that characterize the present time. They form no mean proportion of the mischievous tendencies of the moment.

Not even the Church of Rome has escaped the universal agitation. On the continent of Europe ecclesiastical despotisms that were rooted in the customs of centuries have yielded to the force of the new

movement. In Italy, Spain and Austria, where, a few years ago, everything seemed to lie in the torpor of a merely quiescent faith, the spell has been broken. Traditional claims of the church have been resisted and important liberties secured. Even Mexico has not escaped the world-wide impulse. The incubus of ecclesiasticism sets more lightly even on her. A free movement of thought begins to be apparent.

Strange to say, in Great Britain and the United States the Roman Catholic mind seems to acquiesce more fully in the spiritual despotism of the church than in any other country. Just here where thought is free as air, the absolute authority of the church over thought is yielded by the Romanist in this country more readily than it is in Austria. There is not so much as one Dollinger to be found. This is to be accounted for by the fact that in this country the Romanists are constantly on the defensive. The absurdities of their creed are being constantly assailed, so that they are roused constantly against all comers. This is just the state of mind in which men will go for their sect to any length or any extremity. They will take the most extreme ground when excited by opposition. The Romanists of this country and England, therefore, intelligent as many of them are, are ready for anything that their church may demand. They will perform feats of credulity that might edify

a Spaniard. If the Bishops say so, the Pope is infallible.

But in Europe the church has its Hyacinthes and Dollingers, and gives proof of the presence of a restive spirit of inquiry.

Simultaneously with this new impulse is also a backward movement. It is an effort of the church to settle itself so deeply upon its "rock" that the stream of truth may be defied. The Pontificate of Pius IX. is distinguished for having originated two dogmas, the most remarkable and the most taxing upon credulity that have ever appeared in the history of canons. The first was the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, and the second the Infallibility of the Pope.

The desperate backward movement of Rome is itself a sign of the time. It is an effort of the Papacy to fortify itself against the encroachments of the rising tide which threatens to engulf it. It is the counter movement, and, therefore, itself an evidence of the extent and power of the current of thought that has swelled above its banks and sweeps over the world.

No one can be blind enough not to see it. The new era of thought is restless and adventurous, and attacks with equal eagerness the old error and the old truth. Once fairly warm in the work of demoli-

tion, it knows not where to stop. It falls into a frenzy of contempt for the past, and despises the old truth for no other reason than that it is old. The truth and the error that have the common accident of being old are doomed to indiscriminating assault.

Chapter Third.

No state of mind is more unfriendly to the reception of truth than intellectual pride. God, who knows what is in man, has given us this injunction : “Lean not to thine own understanding.” But there is a large class of men who disdain all restraint upon the intellect, and rejoice upon the proud delusion of reason. Since the publication of the “Positive Philosophy” the haughty ambition to assert the supremacy of reason, even in the domain of faith, has become more apparent and noisy. Men will make even the mysteries of religion subject to the same analysis as physical science. They will not tolerate mystery. Nothing must be allowed to be above them. They must feel themselves to be supreme in intellectual power over all things.

There is not a more dangerous nor a more wicked sentiment. Not that it is wrong for a man to know all that may be known, or to understand all that may be understood. But not to recognize the limit of knowledge, not to admit the weakness of reason, is

to show the greater weakness—the weakness of vanity. True strength recognizes its own limit and acts upon the true conception of its own resources. Humility is a condition of the right exercise of reason. The best results of rational investigation are attained by those who know that there are infinite heights above them, and who keep clear of the confusion that results from the mad effort to reason in regions that are above the reach of our reason. Keeping themselves in the light, they escape the embarrassments and blunders of those who adventure into the confines of darkness.

The philosophy that will allow nothing to be above itself will be evermore walking in darkness. It will be evermore delivering its rational conclusions only to be convicted of ignorance and falsehood. This species of philosophy has been greatly on the increase of late years. It will extend a scientific method into fields where the facts are wanting from which a method may be constructed.

The consequence is, that every new advance of science gives rise to hasty conclusions which immediately require revision and correction. The history of Geology furnishes an illustration. From most insufficient data the scientist constructs a cosmogony only to be confounded by the discovery of further facts which destroy the basis of his theory. Expe-

rience ought, ere this time, to have made men modest. But they become constantly more presuming, and every little philosopher must put in his word and hear himself talk.

The great gaping world, meantime, encourages this class of men by its eager credulity. Any man who has sufficient ingenuity to propound a new theory, or to set an old one in a new light, can gain audience. Especially so if he shall invade the domain of Faith. Whatever sets itself up to correct the Bible will be welcomed by an eager and credulous multitude. If only it shall assume a learned air, and deliver itself with abundant affectation of scientific terminology, its fortune is made. It will have its run.

There is a class of writers who have really a high claim to distinction as laborious investigators. There is much truth given. These men are recognized and honored as savans, and justly so. Men admire them. Much that they say is true and convincing. The credit they acquire for thoroughness and depth disarms criticism, and men fall into the snare of receiving whatever they may say. But, unfortunately, in addition to the accurate scientific results which they give, there is much loose deduction, much inference and speculation, and all sorts of monstrous and illegitimate conclusions are unwittingly taken on the credit of that which is true.

It was this which gave such a mischievous influence to the “Vestiges of Creation.” It is the same accuracy of laborious research which enables Darwin to secure credence for those inferences which he makes, as if they were necessary results, when in fact they are not at all so. They are accepted partly for the show of learning with which they are set forth, and partly on account of a disposition, prevalent in some quarters, to embrace anything that may militate against the simple truth of the history of creation in the book of Genesis. They minister to the pride of intellect which is restless under all restraint. It is so restless that it will grasp at any theory which assumes a rational tone rather than rest upon a divine statement in simple faith.

How prevalent and dangerous this disposition is appears from the popularity of the speculations of Knott and Gliddon—speculations that would, as I believe, have commanded little or no attention but from the fact that they were supposed to conflict with the Christian account of the origin of our race. For this reason, I take it, many half-educated men, with little of either capacity or opportunity for learned investigation, and desiring to appear the champions of science as against revelation, become ready disciples of any teacher who will offer them a theory of the origin of man which professes to rest on grounds

of scientific induction. No matter how loosely the conclusions may be hung on to the premises, if there is only ample parade of scholarship in setting forth the premises, they will be welcomed as a plausible pretext against the literal import of the Word of God.

Indeed, very little either of learning or capacity will suffice to give the scientific pretender prestige. So wide-spread is this abnormal tendency of thought that such a miserable jumble of misstatements and absurdities as appear in "Ariel" is greedily devoured by vast numbers of men who think themselves wise, and have neither the amount of information nor of common sense to enable them to detect the grossest misstatements or the most bungling fallacies. Thus the most pitiable unreason struts and takes on scholarly airs, and chuckles in ludicrous conceit of its own reason. This poor pamphlet, "Ariel," had such a run that even Doctors of Divinity found it necessary to undertake a grave and formal refutation of it.

All this betrays a lust after new theories. It is a bad state of mind—a sort of mental fever which needs medication.

Nor has the Church escaped the contagion. Men with a little learning must recast the doctrine of the fathers. Not because the old doctrine does not rest on a firm basis of Scripture, but from a restless de-

sire to discover something new, men are sometimes betrayed into dangerous habits of theorizing, which, in some cases, threaten to end in disastrous misbelief. The lust of novelty takes possession of them, and with it sometimes also a certain vanity which is ambitious of distinction. Possibly this subtle motive is present in many cases where it is not suspected. Men who would not admit the fact to themselves come to relish the reputation of being innovators. They love to be considered, and to consider themselves, adventurous thinkers. They "lean to their own understanding." The spirit of the Positive Philosophy takes possession of them. They will not be considered imitators. They will explore their own pathway through the wilderness of thought. They will not follow the open highways. No doubt they take great pleasure in their own speculations, and the results of their labor are very satisfactory to their own reason, so that they come to entertain a very high opinion of their reason. In proportion as they do so they lose respect for the fathers, and conclude that the shackles of the past are to be cast off and spurned. The doctrinal formulæ of the ages that are gone come to be lightly esteemed. They make a merit of being independent of all traditional trammels. They will call no man master. They will think for themselves.

All this sounds finely and is very taking. But it betrays a dangerous condition.

Of course, a doctrine is not to be accepted merely on the ground of its antiquity. Many fatal errors have a traditional prestige. Nevertheless, that is not a safe temper which leads a man to break hastily and violently away from the past. The pride of innovation is not favorable to candid thought. It impels men forward before the ground has been thoroughly surveyed, so that the innovator who haughtily repudiates the past is very likely to embrace novelties for the reason that they *are* novelties, which is no better proof of the truth of a doctrine than antiquity is. Indeed, a new doctrine is to be more suspected of error, *a priori*, than an old one. There is a certain respect, and even veneration, due to opinions that have been held by the wise and good of many generations, though it may turn out that the wise and good have been in error for many generations. Yet there is a fair presumption in their favor until the proof against them has been most thoroughly sifted. It is more prudent to follow *them* than to take one's own way rashly and in the mere wantonness of adventure and novelty. We may go astray by following the beaten track, but we are less likely to do so than if we attempt the wilderness without a guide.

If a young man had all knowledge and all experi-

ence he might safely follow the leadings of his thought. But he has not, and on many points on which it seems to him that he has all the bearings of the case he will find after a while that he was mistaken, and that after all the fathers had thought more deeply than he. He sees the matter in a strong light on one side and hastily concludes that the whole truth is in that view. In the joy of his new discovery he graciously commiserates all that went before him, and congratulates all who are to come after him. Older and wiser men, however, know that he has seen the chameleon only in one situation. The danger with him now is that he will commit himself to the assertion that the creature is green, and feel bound to defend it against all comers to his life's end.

While, therefore, the new is not to be condemned because it is new, still less is to be accepted on that ground. On the contrary, it is to be held under suspicion until it is well vindicated.

In the midst of the rapid evolutions of the present time we are in danger of disparaging antiquity—of holding it in contempt—and, in excess of self-confidence, going fairly wild in the abandon of speculative adventure. Thousands are doing it, to the detriment of religion and morals. What truth is yet to be discovered let us have it by all means.

But let us look out, in the meantime, that we do not exchange the Koh-i-noor for a paste imitation from Paris. Inexperienced traffickers in gems might commit such a blunder.

Chapter Fourth.

I HAVE mentioned a number of facts which indicate a strong tendency, at this time, toward extreme theories and adventurous speculation—a tendency so wide-spread and infectious as, perhaps, to threaten even the integrity of doctrine in the Church.

Many things conspire at this juncture to aggravate the tendency. Christian civilization is undergoing great changes. Industries are being put on a new footing by means of a new motive power and the use of machinery in every department of labor. Great corporations and monopolies are carrying on the world's work. They have displaced individual enterprise in many employments. Travel, both by land and water, has been revolutionized. Every thing is quickened amazingly. Conversation is carried on by lightning, and the ends of the earth have been brought together.

This is all the result of intense mental activity, and tends to increase the activity which has produced it. Human thought is at work upon the forces of

nature beyond anything known in the past. It is prying into the occult relation of natural laws with most wonderful acuteness and force. Every day witnesses a new discovery and lays bare a new secret. Priceless rewards of mental effort provoke to more arduous endeavor. The mental stimulus is tremendous, and the action produced by it in many cases intense to a degree that is unhealthy. The tension is unnatural. The results are in many respects of great value, but the over-tension is a high price, in many cases, for the good result. In this evil world there is ever some evil going on along with the good, to balance it in a measure.

The mental tension of our day brings along much good with it. It brings, also, some evil. Thought, over-stimulated, can not always work safely. There will be lesion occasionally. There will be misdirection.

One accompaniment of this unusual mental activity, and indeed an incident of it, is the unprecedented facility for the diffusion of thought. Ideas, true or false, have most ample means of propagation. Men are in vital communication with each other all over the world. All that goes on now is at once made public. The telegraph, the steamship, the railroad, and the daily paper, give it to the four winds. This incessant communication brings all the

enterprises, ideas, theories, and activities of the world into constant competition. The consequence is, an active fermentation of thought. New ingredients are placed together in the crucible every day, to result in agitation, and ultimate in new combinations, affecting thought and opinion in every department of life. The opinions of all the world get mixed in with each other now. The German philosophy, the Parisian infidelity and socialism, the English liberalism, the New England spiritism and free-loveism, the Romanist fanaticism, and the Liberalist irreverence—all sorts of speculations and fancies and beliefs mingled with each other, spread abroad with the speed of the railroad, over the whole earth, inviting comparison and provoking discussion. And men are everywhere at work, with such faculty of thought as they have been endowed with everywhere, upon all the beliefs and all the unbeliefs that are in the world. The mental stomach is over-loaded, and there is much bad digestion. The mass is too great to be well disposed of. There is not only dyspepsia (of which there is much), but fever.

The activity of the press contributes to the effect. All sorts of ideas are in incessant daily play, through the newspapers, upon the public mind. All sorts of sense and nonsense get a hearing through this

medium. All the world is in incessant intercourse, and every species of opinion gets afloat to play what part it may be for good or ill. At the same time a large and increasing class of men and women live by literary labor. There is great temptation when they write for bread, to write for mere popular effect. Sensational theories are always greedily taken by the public. Much deleterious literature is provided just because it will pay. This all helps on the prevalence of vitiated thought.

To make the matter worse, every half-educated man believes in himself. He esteems himself a very capable thinker. It is a hobby with the American teacher to make the pupil think for himself. The boy at school, while the down is yet invisible upon his upper lip, imagines himself profound. It is his duty to form an opinion, and he forms it, and is nothing loth to announce it. His opinion is as good as that of any one else. So he is encouraged to believe, and so he is very ready to believe. Before his mind has reached any such maturity as to enable him to reason efficiently or safely, he is dashing on to his conclusions by a short route. The habit of forming opinions promptly is soon acquired. He feels himself disparaged unless he has an opinion ready on all sorts of subjects. Henceforth you shall never find him at a loss. He will have his views, and will

be very well pleased with himself in being able to take his stand on every subject.

It is marvelous how many small men there are, who get everything at second-hand, and yet believe themselves great thinkers. A narrow mind, made active by educational stimulus, is sure to be self-reliant and dogmatic. Incapable of seeing a matter in more than one of its relations, it reaches its conclusions at once, and is supremely satisfied with the clearness of its view, while one of larger range is embarrassed by the many considerations which it perceives as having to be disposed of before the truth is reached.

This self-reliant littleness abounds in the land, and it is very responsive to new and startling theories. The first plausible putting of a new doctrine strikes them, and they embrace it instantly. Once committed to it they become enthusiastic disciples and propagandists, and their very narrowness and self-conceit insure them against discovering the blunder they have made. They soon master the routine of shallow plausibilities by which the new opinion is maintained, and, proud of their own volubility, they never tire of "argument."

The wide diffusion of educational advantages in this country has multiplied this class of men very greatly. You will find them in every village, at

every cross-roads. They are not without their influence. To men less educated, and especially to boys, they seem very learned and very wise. Their opinions weigh much in their little circle. By virtue of the fact that they are "educated," they feel themselves bound to have an opinion, and by virtue of their pride of leadership they are tempted to embrace and propagate new opinions. At the same time, by virtue of natural shallowness, when they begin to adventure upon new courses of thought, they are sure to go wrong.

Upon the whole, activity, intenseness and adventure characterize the present period. The world is too enterprising for sobriety. The newspaper is "master of the situation." Opinions formed on the suggestion of the moment go into print while they are hot. The newspaper is the voice of the day. All conceivable varieties of editors and correspondents deliver all conceivable varieties of statements and speculations. These go far to form the mind of the country. In all this heat and hurry there is much greater likelihood of finding intensity than a safe maturity of thought.

From what I have written it is not to be inferred that I take a gloomy view of the situation. Far from it. I have said already that the movement is, in the long run, a true progress. Out of all the up-

roar and effervescence of the present time good will come in the end. In the meantime the movement is, just now, too violent to be free from danger. There are sinister elements present. The activity of the moment is feverish. It threatens, for the time being, to unsettle in many minds the most elementary truths of religion and morals. Amid the imperfections of thought and depravities of feeling that are inherent in human nature we must look well to those primary conditions of all that is good which are given in the Christian faith.

I would by no means check the progress of the world, but I would, if possible, guard against the evils that are incidental to progress. While humanity is hurrying on to a higher civilization let us see to it that the result be not delayed and damaged by the very headlong speed of the movement. Let Paris bear witness that there is danger. Let our own civil war bear witness. Let the deterioration of morals that follows upon the track of socialist and free-love ideas bear witness. Let the licentious tendencies so apparent on all sides at this moment bear witness.

In a word, when progress ceases to be regulated by a sound conservatism of sentiment it runs too fast and goes to wreck. There are great principles of truth that must be the basis of all progress, and

when a mad spirit of change, which is sometimes an incident of progress, disregards them, ruin follows. The same headlands that indicated the track of safety to the rude sailor of three thousand years ago must be consulted by the pilot of the steamship to-day.

Chapter Fifth.

I HAVE already mentioned the spirit of independence, the want of reverence for the past, which obtains so largely at this time. This spirit is more to be dreaded in the hurry and fever prevalent now than in more sober times. But it is an incident of the very cause which makes it dangerous. It is the more to be dreaded on account of the plausible grounds upon which it justifies itself. The past is full of error—mischievous and fatal error. The inference is that, therefore, the past is entitled to no respect.

But it must be remembered that there has been a line of belief from the first ages, settled, fixed, definite, amid all the complex and protean forms of misbelief. About this faith all that is stable and pure in the Church from age to age has clustered. It is readily discovered through all that is adventitious, and of later or occasional prevalence. From ante-Papal and ante-Palagian times it shines, a fixed star in Christian thought. From time to time it has been formulated with great accuracy in standards of

belief about which the Church has crystallized, and by which it has been held in its integrity against the irruption of all false philosophies and semi-pagan superstitions. The influence of those perennial beliefs has been singularly independent of organic conditions. The Church is not a close corporation, holding in virtue of organic and historic succession. It is the outgrowth of a *spirit*. It is the expression of a *life*. In its organic history there has been mutation. The Church of Rome and the Greek Church have maintained an external, organic existence from the early ages of the Christian era. But in everything that belongs to the ecclesiastical constitution they are radically changed. In the course of the ages the early spirit has appeared constantly, here and there, in connection with the early creed, and, independent of organic unities, has presented evermore the vital "unity of faith."

Surely we must respect, we must venerate the form of sound words which has been the conservator of the Church amid all the vicissitudes of time, and against all the encroachments of hierarchies and the corruptions of ecclesiasticism. Rome, a perpetual corporation, has perpetually changed her creed. There have been two additions in our day. But there is a historical creed, ever bearing witness against her innovations on one side, and against all

other heresies on the other, that stands as a beacon through all the past.

Certainly an indiscriminating veneration of antiquity, simply as such, is not safe, any more than lust of novelty. But the veneration of the old beliefs around which the piety of apostles and martyrs appears as a halo, which have been the rallying point of saints and confessors in all the ages, is a very high and pure sentiment. It is a most wholesome conservatism.

Indeed, mere conservatism, mere clinging to the belief we have, so it be not hopelessly obstinate or stupid, serves a good end. It keeps a man in position long enough to move safely when he does move. It preserves him from rash changes. It saves him from an erratic course. It is better to be a little too stationary than to move too lightly. Many a man has resisted specious error when he could not confute it, just from a conservative tone of feeling, until, having gained time, he has come to detect the falsehood of the new theory. Holding on at first from sentiment, for awhile, the time gained has brought conviction.

The supreme purpose must ever be to follow the truth—not to follow that which is old nor that which is new, as such. But it is never safe to grasp a new doctrine upon first blush. Time must be taken for

sober reflection, and the conservative spirit secures time.

Besides that, there is a just presumption of the truth of that doctrine which wise and thoughtful and good men in all the past have deduced from Holy Scripture. The presumption is not final proof, but must have great weight with all well-balanced minds. It would certainly be great presumption in any man to discard the Apostles' Creed upon any hasty interpretation or partial investigation. Its history entitles it to great weight.

The fact is, that to a very large extent men's beliefs are formed upon grounds other than a broad induction upon satisfactory investigation. Few men have either the opportunity or capacity for such investigation. Hence the necessity for teachers of religion. The teacher is not infallible, but he ought to be an intelligent interpreter and expositor of the infallible standard, which is the Bible. The unlearned man is greatly dependent upon the prevalent views of his circle. His own are largely taken from the men whom he respects as leaders of thought. The belief of any Church will be inevitably taken largely from its ministers. It is inevitable that it should be so. And it is well. The more intelligent minds of the Church, carefully searching the Scriptures, and in communion with the purest forms of

Christian thought in the past, are not likely to go astray. Individuals will, but the pastorate, in the long run, will hold the true doctrine. No one of them is infallible, nor all of them together. But Holy Scripture will assert itself upon the simplicity of a candid mind, and the true doctrine will prevail where the supremacy of the Bible is recognized and the pride of innovation is overcome.

“The universal consent of the fathers” is a fiction. Yet there was great uniformity of doctrine in the earliest ages of the Church. But to take patristic authority as equal to that of the Bible, is yet more fatal error than the total repudiation of creeds. The true course lies between the two in the way I have already indicated. The interpretation that has held its ground for eighteen hundred years, though not a final authority, is greatly to be venerated. It is not likely to be found false.

True, much error has come into Christian teaching, and it is to be found in some venerable creeds. So that at last the Bible is the final standard. Doctrines that are not found at all in that book are of course false. This class of doctrines can be easily traced in the history of the Church to the time when they first came in as innovations. Though comparatively long established in a portion of the Church, they are recent as compared with the earliest stand-

dards which have been generally received. The doctrines of purgatory, transubstantiation, priestly absolution, and many others, are of this class.

The creed of the Roman Church, indeed, plants itself on *the authority of the Church*. The Church, and not the Bible, in this theory, is the standard of truth. This is plainly false, for the Church in different ages and countries is in conflict with itself. The standard is the Bible. The creed is but a compendious statement of the doctrine contained in Holy Scripture. In the Scriptures the sum of doctrine is nowhere given in a formal, compendious statement in one place. It is scattered through the whole volume. The creed is a brief, condensed statement of them, and expresses the understanding of those who frame it as to what the Bible affirms upon the points embraced in it. It is not the mind of the Church as to what ought to be truth, but as to what the Bible affirms to be truth.

To find out what this book teaches is an undertaking entirely compatible with the functions of the human understanding, and though the individual mind may fall into error and misinterpretation, yet the labor of the most cultivated and conscientious minds of the Church for centuries must be looked upon with great respect. The result of this labor is more likely to be a just interpretation than are the

opinions of a single mind running in one line of thought.

The teaching of the Bible upon the great vital doctrines is remarkably clear. Then you say, what use for creeds? I answer, that the experience of all time is that there are constantly arising instances of marvelous perverseness of understanding on the part of plausible, ingenious men, who lead many astray. The collective good sense of the Church expressing in a condensed form the true teaching of the Bible, is a great safeguard against the influence of these perverse and erratic men. The right of a Church to require conformity to a creed will be considered hereafter, if God permit. At present I am only undertaking to show that the collective understanding of the wisest and best men is worthy of a very high regard when it is employed in ascertaining what God has communicated in Holy Scripture.

When any set of men calling themselves "the Church," undertake the authority of making doctrine independently of the Scriptures, it is quite another thing. In point of fact, nearly all the superstitions appearing in the Church are to be traced to that cause. On the other hand, a proud independence and disposition to be bold and adventurous in the use of individual liberty has given rise to many erratic movements and mischievous heresies.

Many men in our day have had their heads turned with the idea of *progress*, and are looking for progress in everything. No doubt we are making great progress in many particulars. But amidst the change there are some things that abide ever the same. We have to take the multiplication table exactly as our fathers did.

The fundamental Christian doctrine is exactly the same in all ages, and to be received and understood in the same way. Nothing is more changeless. Nothing lies down deeper in the simplicity of absolute truth. It must remain as it is.

Chapter Sixth.

INDIFFERENCE to creeds is often vaunted as a great virtue, and confounded with charity. The merit of charity is intuitively recognized and confessed by all. It is the chief grace. It has great credit with all men. In so great honor is it held, indeed, that whatever sails under its colors is secure of popular favor. In a world so disordered as this we live in many bad things manage to get into classification with the good, and to secure homage from the association, when, if they were only in their own proper place they would be seen in their true character, and be shunned and avoided as most deadly things.

It is not the part of charity to be complacent to sin. Charity looks with no favor upon murder, adultery, or theft. All crime makes war on the good which it is in the nature of charity to establish and secure. Charity, is, therefore, repugnant to crime. All sin is an assault upon the good. Toward all sin, therefore, charity must be repugnant.

In the last analysis sin and falsehood are one.

The ultimate truth in moral relations violated is sin. The ultimate truth in moral relations acted upon is virtue. To identify complacency toward a false creed with charity is therefore to confound light and darkness. There are no two things in nature or religion more incompatible. They are utterly and vehemently repugnant to each other.

God has been at great pains to impress on us the value of the truth and the guilt of its rejection, or even indifference to it. He is “jealous of his word above all his name.” How peculiar, how striking is this declaration! He would have us to understand that the most sacred thing in his most holy name is his word. Men may trifle less guiltily with any thing else even in the divine perfections and prerogatives. His truth may not be tampered with. Read 2 Thess. ii., 8–12. That Wicked, “whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish,” perverts the faith of such as “receive not the love of the truth.” This is the fatal fact. *They receive not the LOVE OF THE TRUTH.* They are not loyal to the Truth. Their hearts are alienated from it by pride or pleasure or lust, or some other selfish or carnal motive. The Truth is not supreme with them. “And for this cause”—mark how fearful the pen-

alty is—“for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” Men who “receive not the *love of the truth*” God gives over to the domination of the lie they love, that they may be damned. They are abandoned to the strong delusion of their chosen lie with all its horrible retributions. God makes their own elect falsehood the instrument of their degradation and ruin.

The very terms in which this passage is couched seem to have been selected to impress the mind with awe, and to produce a solemn sense of the guilt of trifling with the truth. Upon those who do so trifle God sends strong delusion that they may believe their lie, and that believing it they may be damned.

In fact, the foundations of all that is good are laid in truth. To be at variance with the truth is to be at variance with the good. Every departure from the truth is so far forth a departure from goodness. Indifference to creeds, so far as they symbolize the essential truth of Christian doctrine, is to be indifferent to all that is in the essence of religion itself. All that is sacred in religion is in its true creed. To err here is to err fatally. To be indifferent here is to be indifferent about religion itself. For the essence of religion is in the truth which it delivers.

The foundation of all worship, its experience and its practice, is here. If it is a crime to be indifferent about God at all, it is a crime to be indifferent about his Truth—his Word—of which he is jealous above all his name.

The most vital element of a man's character is his belief. Pause upon this proposition a moment. *A man's belief is the fundamental fact in his character.* Let me know *what* a man believes, and *how deeply and strongly* he believes it, and I will tell you all the rest. All character is the outgrowth of faith. Men may in many cases act against their beliefs, but the belief in such cases is not deep and vital. Where it is deep and vital to act against it is the exception and not the rule. A belief loosely and carelessly held will produce no practical result, for the reason that no motive is called into operation by it. Other and deeper beliefs held at the same time will give their complexion to the character. So a man may believe in a careless way in the truth of the Bible, but he believes more strongly in the value of money; and the stronger belief neutralizes the other and determines character. So it may even be that a man will "hold the truth in unrighteousness."

In religion a man will be Pagan, Papist or Protestant, according to his belief. How vital and practical

are the differences between those classes, I need not describe. All that is vital and practical in those differences comes of the differing *beliefs*. Upon his belief the Pagan will sacrifice his own offspring, even "the fruit of his body, for the sin of his soul." Upon his belief in priestly absolution the Papist will confide all his most secret sins to his confessor. Upon his belief the Protestant will go to God through Christ alone as the only Mediator.

Let a man only be deeply and earnestly religious and his *belief* will give you the practical side of his religion as well as the theoretical side. All religion that has any subjective reality takes its complexion from beliefs. On this point certainly there can be no two opinions.

If this be true, the question of creeds can not be an unimportant one. It is, in fact, the question of religion itself. Out of the creed all religion comes, subjectively. Religious thought, feeling and action are evolved out of it. Under its control a man will kill Stephen or die with him, as the case may be. It is the fact on which religious character hinges.

Sincerity is sometimes held to be a corrective of all the evil effects of a wrong belief. "If a man is only sincere," we are told, "God will not hold him to account for a mistake in his creed."

There are several things to be considered with respect to this view.

In the first place, when a man begins to console himself in this way there is great danger that he will come to hold the truth itself too lightly. It will cease to be the great object with him. He will not be jealous over himself as to what he is to believe. An easy going, self-complacent consciousness of sincerity (itself deception, maybe) will dispense him from any solemn obligation to know the truth. In this state of mind he is likely to embrace that which his fancy may be pleased with, or that which may accommodate his circumstances. Still the complacent self-affirmation of sincerity is undisturbed, and in virtue of it the man holds himself insured against all mischievous effects of any possible error in his creed. This is a self-indulgent state of mind altogether incompatible with real exaltation and purity of character.

Then, further, men are liable to be deceived as to the fact of their own sincerity itself. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it.” It is even possible for one whose whole character rests on duplicity to imagine himself a very paragon of sincerity. Nothing is more natural, more easy or more common than undetected duplicity. Men often condemn loudly in others traits that are offensively prominent in themselves, and even acts of which themselves are habitually

guilty. I have heard incorrigible backbiters backbite their neighbors for backbiteing. I have heard the vainest men *naively* condemn other men for the same fault. Indeed, I am not sure but that vanity in another is particularly odious to a vain man. He thinks he hates this small vice prodigiously, but as it is a fact of his own consciousness he is well pleased with it.

In like manner I have seen men full of little deceptions of which they seemed unconscious. And, mark it well, if you find a man always asserting his own candor, you will find him a man of this class. "This man deceiveth himself." It would seem that he half wakes up to the consciousness of his own insincerity, and the bluster of a constant profession of candor is required to bolster his faith in himself. The deceitfulness of the human heart is extremely subtle. It is a sort of volatile gas which it is difficult to detect or analyse. Nevertheless it is a very real thing, and often deadly. "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults." It has been said that if a man ever once says to himself, "I am an humble man," his humility is destroyed by the very fact—a perfect humility being incompatible with self-consciousness. Perhaps there is truth in this. At any rate, it seems scarcely safe for a man to make a parade of his virtues. The very pretension itself

is unfavorable to the highest virtue, if not incompatible with it. Else why is it so often the case that the very virtues which pretentious men parade most noisily they are most deficient in?

I do verily believe that it is more practicable—far more—to find the objective truth in religion than to assure one's self of absolute sincerity of motives in forming his creed. And the men who have a false creed are, after all, perhaps, not so candid as they and their apologists are fain to believe. If they were face to face with God the fact of their insincerity, latent in consciousness now, would be brought out into agonizing power. Perhaps this will be the cause of much of the dismay and anguish of final judgment. In fact, the less a man employs himself in complacent introspection, and the more he occupies his mind with God and his law, the more likely he will be to reach a high standard of sincerity.

But allow that a man is sincere, perfectly so. This can not atone for all possible vices of belief arising from other causes. There may have been negligence and carelessness in forming opinions. There may have been willfulness. Want of sincerity at the outset may have been followed by settled conviction. Pride may have had a fatal influence in giving direction to thought. You may admit a man's sincerity and yet find many reasons upon which to convict him of guilt in embracing a vicious creed.

In fact, the more sincerely a man embraces a false creed the more deeply will his character be tainted by it. A false view of God and his law strongly held will put a man out of any proper adjustment to the divine government.

Truth and right are absolute. They are not one thing to one man, and another thing to another man, according as each may see the matter. They are ever the same, however false we may view them. Some things there are, as the apostle teaches about days and meats, that have an accidental relation to questions of duty, and according as a man sees this or that significance in them they may be right or wrong to him. But it is not so with the essential truths of morality and religion. They abide. They are ever the same. Any false attitude toward them taken sincerely or insincerely is fatal.

By what gracious agency God may visit those who have had no opportunity of knowing the truth, to whom the gospel has never been preached, we do not know. But when the gospel comes to a man fairly we are assured in the most solemn manner that a heavy guilt is incurred both by the rejection and the perversion of it.

Perhaps, after all, a want of sincerity in the highest sense, a subtle species of latent duplicity, may be at the bottom of all fatal misbelief where the truth of

the gospel is made known. The conditions of a right faith are certainly practicable, and the condemnation of perverse thought, according to holy Scripture, is as heavy as that of perverse living. In fact, as I have before shown, perverse thinking is at the bottom of wrong conduct.

Can theft be supposed to be innocent in a man whose perverse creed esteems it a virtue? Rather, is not his whole nature fundamentally vicious in virtue of its creed? The more sincere the worse, if he may be considered sincere.

The question, then, is not one of sincerity, but of conformity or nonconformity to the truth of God. A false attitude toward the truth of God is wicked and fatal. Arsenic is not nutritious to the man who may believe it to be so. The little child that believes a lighted candle to be a pretty, harmless plaything, and puts its fingers in the flame, is not saved from torture by its belief. No more certainly will physical than moral truth assert itself against all wrong faiths.

It is, then, of the utmost consequence that men should have correct views of truth. Especially is it important in matters of religion. This is the most vital of all truth, and error with respect to it is most damaging and fatal. A false creed in the mind is an abnormal condition, affecting the whole spiritual nature.

Complacency toward false creeds is no true charity, any more than complacency toward bad morals. The false creed is as bad as the wrong act. It is the duty of the Church, and especially of the ministry, to “contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints,” and to “drive out all erroneous and strange doctrines.”

Chapter Seventh.

THE old distinction between *essentials* and *non-essentials* in religion is unquestionably just. Many matters connected with religion have not been defined by holy Scripture. Wherever the Bible is silent we must be modest. Take, for example, the *forms* of ordinances. No specific regulations have been given. If one man believes that the Lord's Supper should be received kneeling, he may not condemn his brother who receives it in another posture. He who believes immersion in water to be the proper form of baptism may not condemn his brother who prefers pouring as the mode. The form of the ordinance has not been defined. It is inferred from certain facts by one man that immersion must be the mode. Another man, taking another class of facts, infers from them that pouring is certainly the mode. At any rate, the Holy Spirit has not specifically enjoined this mode or that. We are bound, therefore, to hold this question of modes among the non-essentials. If it were essential we should have received minute instructions with respect to it.

There is a whole universe of speculative thought connected with religion. The relation of the human will to the divine sovereignty opens many questions which are purely speculative, and which revelation does not undertake to solve. Certainly, if they had any vital bearing upon the question of salvation, the plain statement of Scripture would have made the truth clear on every point. It is very easy for us to attribute a dogmatic value to our own theories and conclusions. But where God has allowed liberty let no man dare to impose the yoke.

There is no doubt that many men have gone astray in the wilderness of metaphysics. They adventure with perfect self-confidence into the depths of the forest and wander there for the rest of their natural lives. The trouble is, that they do not know even enough to find out that they are lost.

But metaphysics has a connection with Christian doctrine, and a man greatly astray in his speculations will be liable to fall into doctrinal error, and that of the gravest kind. So long as his speculations are nothing more than speculations all may be well enough, and if he does blunder no great harm may be done. At least no man or Church has any right to condemn him where revealed light is wanting. But let him beware how he ventures, and see to it that he shall not transcend the just limits of specu-

lation and place himself in conflict with the teachings of the word of God.

I suppose that in the whole region of metaphysics there is nothing more subtle, more abstruse, or more involved than Psychology. Yet no field of speculation is more tempting. The data are in consciousness. The inquiry has respect to our own nature. It is fascinating. We seem to ourselves to have firm footing. We theorize with perfect confidence until all at once, seeing the very same facts from another stand-point and in other relations, our over-confident conclusions are upset in a moment of time. All this intellectual by-play may be harmless enough so long as it refrains from any invasion of essential dogma. There may be almost infinite differences within permissible limits, and these differences may have a bearing upon religion. Nor can we suppose that a blunder committed within these limits would have any fatal bearing on Christian character. Opinions here, very often, have no practical significance whatever. They do not bear upon character. In all such cases, no doubt, the fullest liberty may be enjoyed without evil effect.

Many things even in the Bible may be variously understood without offense. He who holds the days of creation to be literal days of twenty-four hours would never think of condemning his neighbor as a

heretic for believing the word to be metaphorically used for an indefinite period. Men may understand very variously the significance of the Mosaic rites without questioning each other's orthodoxy. No one would think of placing the brand of heresy upon another who should have a theory of the book of Job or of Ecclesiastes differing from his own. The symbolism of prophecy affords wide scope of various interpretation within limits that do not touch upon saving doctrine. Differences of opinion about the Millennium or the great Red Dragon can not be held to be of any special dogmatic importance.

Or, to come nearer to a vital point, there may be differences of opinion with regard to the interpretation of passages intended to give instruction in righteousness which may not be very important. If my neighbor thinks that the five foolish virgins in the parable of the Ten Virgins represent false professors, and that the parable itself was spoken as a warning to such, he is certainly mistaken. It is clearly an admonition to Christian watchfulness, as is stated in the place itself (Mat. xxv. 13), and the foolish virgins represent careless, unwatchful Christians. Yet I will not regard my neighbor as a heretic for this unaccountable mistake of his. He knows that in many other places God's people are admonished to be watchful, and may himself be a very

watchful Christian. God has graciously provided such ample instruction on all practical points that if a man does blunder on one passage he will be set right by others.

Then great allowance must be made for mere logomachy. After all, words are, in many cases, imperfect vehicles of thought, and frequently men do not understand each other. After long and hot controversies it sometimes turns out that both parties are contending only for different ways of saying substantially the same thing.

Let it not be inferred from all this that there is no such thing as essential or well-defined dogma. There certainly is a range of doctrines which contains everything that is vital in religion. And in this range everything is positive and clear-cut. Everything stands out in full relief. The edges are well defined. The trumpet gives no uncertain note here. "The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." The way-marks are not dim nor uncertain.

I have shown that *character is the product of belief*. From this it follows that that Christian doctrine that bears directly on the life must be *vital*. To err with respect to it is to suffer the greatest damage.

The Scripture teaching as to our relations to God, as to the means of pardon and restoration to the

divine favor, and all that bears directly upon experience and duty, must be regarded as containing the all-important truth, with respect to which neither the church nor the individual can afford to be in error. Error here mars character. Error here places the soul into misadjustment with God and all spiritual truth. It blights character, and it is character that makes destiny.

This is exactly the class of truth that God has defined with such care and simplicity that a "single eye" can not fail to discover it. It is "revealed to babes."

In it is the Life. By it men come to the Life. Out of it they die. Its claims are supreme. Its sanctions are terrible. Alliance with it is peace and triumph. War upon it is defeat and dishonor; it is overthrow and ruin.

In a very important sense the Church is the "pillar and ground of the truth." The gospel has been committed to her custody to preserve and propagate. Her responsibility is solemn.

There has ever been in the world a class of men given to erratic thought, even in regard to those things which are plainest and most essential in religion. They have often been influential. They have controlled large sections of Christendom. They have departed from the Bible and led many after the

way of error. The people of God have had to *contend earnestly for the faith*. So it has been, so it will still be. The all-precious, saving truth, the Church will still have to maintain through storm and conflict. With large tolerance of speculative opinion the followers of Christ must maintain every essential truth at any cost. No vigilance, nor study, nor labor can be misplaced here. This most sacred trust is in their hands and the Master holds them responsible. His honor and the salvation of souls are bound up in it.

With the open Bible, accessible to all, and a quick Christian conscience maintained in the Church, the essential truth is secure. Many instances of aberrant thought there will be, as there will be much evil of all sorts in this fallen world. There is no greater guarantee against depraved thought than there is against depraved feeling or depraved action. Hence there must be the utmost vigilance against error in doctrine as well as against sin in practice.

Chapter Eighth.

I HAVE spoken of the just distinction between essentials and non-essentials in religion. Differences as to the forms of ordinances and in merely speculative opinions can not be regarded as of any vital consequence. These things do not belong to the essence of the Christian faith, but are rather accidents connected with it. The same may be said of forms of Church government. They are accidents of religion and not of the substance of it.

But that which constitutes the very substance of Christian doctrine can not be discarded without essential damage to one's character.

No one, for instance, can be a Christian, in the loosest sense of the term, unless he believes in the divine mission of Christ. It is that which a man believes in that indicates his religious status. Men are classified by their belief. They are Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Pagans, accordingly as they *believe*. *The entire character of a man is determined by the matter and depth of his belief.* He is as he believes.

In such matters as are not of the essence of Christianity, then, a man may believe this or that without any fatal effect upon his character. But when you come to the *essentials* the case is altogether changed. Misbelief here is fatal. It forfeits all just claim to Christian character.

Even in the non-essentials it is very desirable to entertain correct opinions. It is much better to hold the truth than to have erroneous views in regard to any matter, even the most unimportant. There is great advantage in perceiving the exact truth in every speculative aspect of Christian doctrine. He who holds any error will suffer so much loss in eternity. It is not indifferent to me to have right or wrong opinions in any region of Christian thought. There is misadjustment of the spiritual nature, in greater or less measure, arising from all misbelief; and while in many points it may not be actually destructive of Christian character, yet in every case it is, and must be injurious.

For proof and illustration of this see 1 Cor. iii. 10-15: "According to the grace of God which is given unto me as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundations can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now, if any man build

upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble ; every man's work shall be made manifest : for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire ; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss : but he himself shall be saved ; yet so as by fire."

Christ is the foundation. All Christian character must rest on him. The true doctrine of Christ is the beginning point of spiritual life. Whatever is an essential part of the *doctrine of Christ* is fundamental, and must be present. It is at the base of the structure, and there can be no building without it. Its absence is fatal. Anything else submitted in its place is fatal. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." He who builds on this foundation will be saved. Even if he should use some bad material in the building, yet "he himself shall be saved." But let him know that it is of great importance to use good material in the whole structure, for all this work shall be *tried by fire*. "The day"—the day of judgment—shall reveal it by the test of fire. All perishable material shall be consumed. He who builds of "wood, hay, stubble, shall suffer loss"—the loss of his work ;

but he himself, having built on the true foundation, shall be saved, “yet so as by fire.” But if his work is of a character that will stand the *test of fire*—if it be of gold, silver, precious stones, “he shall have a reward.” He shall save his work.

Non-essentials, then, are *not unimportant*; on the contrary, they are of great importance, though blunders with respect to them will not involve the loss of the soul.

It will be seen by the drift of the plan that the builders referred to in this passage are *ministers of the gospel*. The work they use in building upon the foundation is the matter of their preaching. If in their teaching they lay the true foundation—if they deliver the essential doctrine of Christ, but bring in afterward false notions, they will be saved, but suffer the loss of all that is involved in their erroneous teaching. To err in essentials is fatal, to err in non-essentials is damaging. He who trifles with the “truth as it is in Jesus” does so at his peril. He who is careless with respect to any truth connected with the doctrine of Christ, however remotely, will be so at heavy cost.

For he who loses his work in eternity, though he himself be saved, will doubtless find it a great loss. It will be an eternal loss. The man whose work abides will find it to enter in the most vital way into his fortunes in the eternal world.

While there is, then, a class of errors that may be tolerated, there is another class God does not tolerate, and which no true Church can allow to be held or disseminated among its people. The Church that allows error in the essential doctrine of Christ is false to Him. Such error is an assault upon Him. It destroys the foundations. It ruins souls. It defeats the ends of the Incarnation. It strikes at Christ the Life. It is deadly. It is treason to the King of Glory.

St. Paul was the “wise master-builder” chosen of God to *lay the foundation*—that is, *to define the doctrine of Christ*. This doctrine contains the truth with respect to the Person of Christ, his offices, his work, and his relation to man. It contains, also, the truth with respect to man as he is related to the work of Christ. It contains the truth with respect to God and the law as these are revealed in Christ.

Certainly all this is contained in the doctrine of Christ, and is fundamental. All this is in the foundation.

These are precisely the points most fully elaborated by the Apostle Paul. He was the “chosen vessel” for this very work. The reader of his Epistles sees the massive repose of this substructure of the Christian faith. The Everlasting Rock lies there

to hold the Church in safety amidst the wreck of all other things. No man need miss the truth here. The light of God shines on it, and nothing but the perverseness of a proud heart can be blind to it.

Not that the true doctrine is to be found alone in the epistles of this chief of the Apostles. It is found in every part of the New Testament, and largely in the Old. But certainly St. Paul was set for the defense of the gospel, eminently, in the definition of doctrine. He has given the metes and bounds more definitely than any other of the sacred writers.

Chapter Ninth.

OF course, the existence of God is the first fact of all religion, and the true doctrine of God is the true religion. As the fact of the existence of God is the foundation of all religion, so is the fact of the incarnation of the Son of God the foundation of the Christian religion.

The Incarnation is a movement of God toward man. It is a fact of the divine administration with respect to man. We are, therefore, to look for the occasion of it in man's nature or circumstances.

The avowed object of His coming indicates a condition which the Incarnation was intended to meet. He came "to put away sin," "to destroy the works of the devil," "to seek and to save the lost."

All this points to a deplorable *fact* in man's condition which occasioned the giving of the only begotten Son of God to take upon himself our nature.

That fact was the fall. In the purity and happiness of his first estate man needed no Redeemer. He was under no condemnation. He was under no

moral disability. He was at peace with his Creator. But in a black hour he listened to the tempter. He turned away his ear from God's word and gave it to the voice of Satan. He fell away from the dominion of God, and yielded himself to the dominion of the wicked one. The narration in the book of Genesis is free from all coloring and affectation. Like the account of the creation, the statement is plain and simple. In the days of his purity man lived in Eden. But when he fell away from God to follow Satan, God "drove him out" upon the ground cursed for his sake. Out upon the ground that had been cursed on his account his children were born. Since that time all his posterity have been under the taint and infection of his sinful nature. They "go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies." "Foolishness is bound up in the *heart* of a child"—of all children. Every man must confess: "I was born in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me."

These are the "lost" whom Christ came "to seek and to save;" this is the "sin" He came to "put away;" these are the "works of the devil" that He "came to destroy." This was the condition into which the "first Adam" plunged us, and from which the "second Adam" came to deliver us.

The depraved condition of man, then, is the *starting point in Christian doctrine*. Christ was given

to be a Saviour, and the very word salvation contemplates a lost condition.

I say that the depraved condition of man IS THE STARTING POINT IN CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE. So deeply is this true that the view a man takes of this first fact will shape his whole theology. Wrong thinking here, by a logical necessity, vitiates the entire creed. For the Christian theology is not a jumble of postulates accidentally brought together. It is a *system of truth* in which every postulate is vitally related to all the rest. The fact in which the whole system has its historical origin denied, the system loses all its coherency and meaning. That fact misconceived, the entire system takes a false coloring. No one doctrine is more vitally related to the whole Christian theology than this. It is not difficult to understand that this must be so

In point of fact, the history of doctrine shows that it *is* so. Heresy at this point loosens the whole fabric—disorganizes the system. The system of doctrine that is pronounced and clear-cut here is, evermore, of high evangelical tone. The system that is loose and equivocal here is, uniformly, out of joint and depraved at every vital point. I am sure that a candid examination of the history of creeds will show this to be the fact. Heresy at this point draws after it almost, if not quite, uniformly a denial

of the divinity of Christ, of the doctrine of justification by faith, of the direct agency of the Holy Spirit in conviction and conversion, and of the witness of the Spirit.

There is no point to be more jealously guarded than this, therefore, on account of its vital importance, and also, it may be added, on account of a native tendency in man to think well of his own character. The truth is unwelcome. No man likes to think meanly of himself or of his race. The value of such a clear statement of this doctrine as that in our Articles of Faith, carrying with it whatever authority the Church has in the interpretation of Scripture, can scarcely be over-estimated. Though no one particular Church can claim infallibility, yet this definition, gathering up all that the Bible teaches on the subject, and uttering the evangelical thought of all ages, coming to us from our own trusted leaders in the Christian life, has kept the Church up to a tone of evangelical thought and spiritual experience that would scarcely have been uniform without it. It is ·

“ART. VII. *Of Original or Birth-Sin.* Original Sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk), but it is the corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually.”

This subject involves the questions : 1, of the fact

of a depraved condition in man ; 2, of the origin of it ; 3, its extent ; and 4, its degree.

1. As to the fact of a depraved condition there is scarcely any difference. From the earliest ages human thought has occupied itself with the “ problem of evil,” with a deep sense all the while of the presence of moral evil, as well as physical. Humanity has ever felt itself to be sick—ay, sick unto death.

The most casual observation of actual life, even upon the lowest standard of right, shows a fearful tendency to wrong-doing in the world, from childhood to old age. There is a wide-spread penchant for evil

The testimony of the Bible is direct and unequivocal. The natural man knoweth not the things of God. Indeed, the Scriptures everywhere imply and state the fact. They go upon this supposition. The Bible history, after following man into sin, shows the divine administration ever after in the light of that fact. The Jewish history is a history of God’s contest with sin. The Jewish ritual is rank with the smoke of sacrifices for sin. The prophetic writings burn with denunciations of sin, and the Psalms wail with confession. The whole philosophy of the New Testament teaching rests upon this fact.

2. As to the origin of it, the history of Genesis is conclusive. The first pair sinned before any child

had been born, so that our race was corrupt at the very fountain of it. That the consequences of this act did not terminate with themselves is clear from the fact that the curse upon the ground was permanent, and that an agonized child-bearing was entailed upon woman in all ages.

But the Apostle Paul states the matter in terms that admit of no question: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." "Through the offense of one many are dead." The origin of our lost estate is fixed in the first transgression. Upon this point men may cavil, but no fair interpretation can question the plain effect of the Apostle's word. From that first moral pollution the entire stream of humanity is tainted. Sin "is naturally engendered of the offspring of Adam."

3. As to the extent of it, it is universal. Every stream that flows from the corrupt fountain is corrupt. The universality of it is inevitable from the source of it. God "hath concluded all under sin." "They have all gone out of the way; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

4. As to the degree of it there has been more question.

Men are well disposed to believe that there is *some* good in human nature, and are ready to make the most of what are called the natural virtues, which

appear often in men who make no pretension to piety. Many noble traits appear to be natural to some men.

This is a very complex subject—entirely too large for any satisfactory examination in this article. But an intelligible conclusion may be reached by a more direct method.

Imagine a man without any light of revelation or influence of the Holy Spirit, without any parental restraint in childhood, any fear of discredit among his friends for wrong-doing, or any dread of civil law ; what sort of natural character would you look for? His character would be perfectly natural to him in such a case. I think it not unlikely that he would be amiable to such as would be compliant to his wishes. So much as that appears among natural brute beasts. But, beyond question, he would be thoroughly savage, selfish, sensual. Such good feeling as he might have toward the companions of his sensual existence would be far below the level of religious or even moral virtue. Judged by any spiritual standard he must be esteemed to be wholly depraved. Such is the natural man.

As to unregenerate men in civilized and Christian communities two observations are to be made :

First, if anything approaching a high standard of virtue may be claimed for them, they owe it to the restraining influence of grace. The grace of God

does much for unconverted men where the gospel is preached. It elevates them to a plane on which repentance is possible. The Comforter—the Holy Spirit—reproves them of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Indeed, I can not doubt that this work of the Spirit is realized even among the most abandoned savages.

Secondly, much that is praiseworthy in conduct arises out of motives which are thoroughly selfish. A man who has no sense of justice may pursue a course of upright dealing from the conviction that thus he will prosper better in the long run. He avoids social scandals because they are a bitter thing. He is generous because it makes him friends. Ostentatious donations are made, even to the Church of God, because they will serve as advertisements and draw business custom. How much the current virtue of the world is to be discounted upon considerations of this kind who can tell? Who of us knows his own heart deeply enough to judge in his own case?

But, so far as the scriptural doctrine of depravity is concerned, character is to be judged of in the light of God's perfect law. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God *with thy whole heart, and soul, and mind, and strength*—thou shalt love *thy neighbor as thyself*. There is a universal consciousness among men of utter inability to attain to this standard.

Besides this, no man can make the slightest movement in repentance without the Holy Spirit “preventing him that he may have a good will, and helping him when he has the good will.” That is to say, in his natural state he is utterly without spiritual strength. He is *dead* in trespasses and sins. A sort of wordly morality he may have, but of true spiritual purity and life he is wholly destitute. The slightest movement toward God must have its inception in the gracious work of the Spirit.

I do not hesitate to say man is *totally depraved*. He is full of wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores, which have neither been bound up nor mollified with ointment. There is absolutely nothing in him that can stand the severity of the law of God. He is by nature the child of wrath. He is bound to the body of death. Sin reigns in his mortal body. Pride, and selfishness, and self-will, and lust, and unbelief are as natural to him as to breathe. There is no pure devotion to God until the work of the Spirit is wrought in us. “Of our own nature we are inclined to evil and that continually. The language of the Confession is not too strong, and it means total depravity.

Whatever may be said of the “natural virtues,” they do not reach the standard of spiritual purity. Even where they flourish they may co-exist with un-

belief, and with a total disregard of God's claims. They are found coupled with the most inveterate wickedness toward God. The most profane men are often distinguished for certain high qualities. Yet of whatever constitutes piety toward God they are wholly destitute.

If men are by nature wholly gone from God, why should any stickle at the phrase "total depravity?"

Chapter Tenth.

I HAVE said that the fact of human depravity is the starting point of Christian doctrine, and that the view of that doctrine taken by any one determines the character of his theological system in its most vital points. This is unquestionably true, and it is a fact which invests this doctrine with the highest importance. There is no other one point around which all doctrine that is distinctively Christian more immediately clusters than this. It is in the Christian system logically, a vital center.

No less direct is its effect on experience than on doctrine. Loose and low views of the depravity of the human heart are rarely ever coupled with any deep religious experience. Nor do we have far to look for the reason of it.

If sin is looked upon as a mere accident of individual life, it ceases to be that dreadful, inveterate, deep-seated fact of consciousness which in the light of the Scripture the doctrine of depravity is. Deep and vivid conviction of sin is, therefore, rarely found

except in minds imbued with the Scripture view of the depraved and wicked state of the heart by nature. At first blush it might seem that the reverse would be the fact—that a sense of guilt would be the more keen and pungent as a man saw it to be his own act without an inveterate inherited condition leading to its commission. But, in point of fact, we know that such is not the case; and what we know to be *fact* is rational—perfectly so—upon a deeper insight into the workings of the human heart

Men are naturally proud of hereditary honors, and as naturally stung by a knowledge of hereditary infamies. Even physical infirmities, and especially deformities that a man is born with, are felt to be a humiliation. We all know how sensitive men are on this point. By how much we are naturally below the average of human life, by so much we feel ourselves disparaged. So when we see sin to be an inborn deformity of our very being, and only then, do we bewail ourselves before God with a true penitential grief. I am a sinner, of an evil race, wholly gone from God from my very birth. I was born in sin. The vileness of my nature comes of a vile parentage.

Even by common, worldly standards of morality, when the son of an honorable line of ancestry commits one dishonorable act, it is held to be proper to

judge generously, and restore him upon fair trial to confidence and honor. But the habitual and *hereditary* thief, the thief born of a thieving father and grown up in an atmosphere of crime, is held to be too deeply debased to allow any hope of honor. He is infamous in his very instincts.

The true language of penitential humility is, "I am a sinner by nature and by practice. I am corrupt within. In me is no good thing. My fathers were sinful men. I am of an evil stock, helplessly, hopelessly evil. To original sin I have added actual transgression, and even against the grace that enlightens me and gives me strength to repent, even against *that* I have sinned."

If sin is regarded as simply a free act that may as freely be repented of and avoided, the sense of it is never very pungent.

Besides all this, it is when the doctrine of depravity is truly held that sin as an element of consciousness is properly estimated. The "motions of sin in the members" are then only seen to be a deadly plague. Then only the fountain of evil thoughts and corrupt affections and lusts is discovered to be the black and awful thing it is. The virus is felt in every vein, infecting every faculty, poisoning the very foundations of thought and feeling.

All these facts enter into a true conviction of sin

as so many elements of it. The feeling is one of guilt, and shame, and hopelessness. Nor is the sense of willful sin wanting. There have been sins enough against saving grace, against light and knowledge, to bring a keen sense of personal responsibility. I am sinful in my nature, and have sinned willfully against the very grace which has provided the remedy.

This clear view of a lost and guilty condition is the only proper foundation of Christian experience. This sense of the vileness and virulence of sin gives a deep tone to the whole Christian character. It is the condition of the most earnest aspirations after purity of heart. It is the condition in which Christ is welcomed with joy, and in which he appears as "chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely." It is the condition in which a man feels the unutterable need of Christ. Salvation, O, how welcome! A Saviour! O, how precious!

The fact of our depravity received with an enlightened understanding and sincere conviction prepares the heart fully for all that is most vital in personal salvation, and the absence of such enlightened conviction equally disqualifies it for any true perception of the riches of Christ.

1. The heart imbued with a sense of its native corruption is prepared to welcome the divine Re-

deemer. God made manifest in the flesh, come with Almighty aid to rescue him from the bondage of Satan, commands his deepest gratitude. In the fatal heritage of sin he hails the coming of the Great Deliverer.

Until the prison doors have been tried and found barred there will be little reverence or care for Him who has come to open them and set the prisoners at liberty. Once the captivity is felt in all its horrible and hopeless import the soul will turn to the Omnipotent Love that holds the keys of hell and of death, and receive him with joy.

2. The offices of the Holy Spirit in awakening and conversion are fully understood only when our native corruption is recognized. Only if we are *dead* in trespass and sins do we require this quickening agency. The gift of the Spirit, and the work assigned him, are otherwise unintelligible ; and he who reads the Scriptures disbelieving the native depravity of man can have no true insight into their teachings upon this subject.

3. The doctrine of the New Birth is out of place in any creed that fails to receive in its full force the fact of human depravity. There is no such thing as being “created in Christ Jesus” if we are not by nature in a sinful state. There is no need that a vital change, wrought by the Holy Ghost, should

take place in our essential being unless our very nature is corrupt. But no fact is set forth with greater emphasis in the New Testament Scriptures than this: "Except a man be born again he can not enter into the kingdom of God." "A man"—any man—must be born of the Spirit before he can have a spiritual nature or be in the kingdom which "is not of this world." "*By nature* we are children of wrath even as others," and only by being born again do we come into the likeness of God. If we are not depraved from our very birth, then from infantile innocency some might progress by natural effort into the highest spiritual condition. But no; there is not in any man a spark of spiritual life until it is kindled in him by the Spirit of God.

The doctrine of depravity—total depravity—and the doctrine of the new birth belong necessarily to the same system. Deny one, and, logically, you must deny both. Admit one and you must admit both. The necessity of the new birth is found only in the fact of our fallen and ruined condition. There remains in man no "vital spark" of spirituality to blaze up into power as fuel may be heaped upon it. Christ alone is the life, and his life is communicated by the Holy Spirit in the New Birth.

This is not mere theorizing. As matter of fact, Churches that deny the doctrine of depravity, or

even endeavor to soften it, have ever held vague language about the new birth. They have no real conception of it as a fact of consciousness. Experience goes out of sight in their public teaching. Religion comes to be a mere form. The Church is full of unhappy examples.

4. The doctrine of justification by faith goes along also with this doctrine of the fall and its results.

The absolute futility and insufficiency of all works done in the unregenerate state can never be seen except this fact be admitted. Pharisaism is defensible if Pelagianism be true. Man may do acceptable works before God if he is not wholly corrupt. But if he is, then there can be no meritorious character in anything he does. The interposing merit of Christ must form the only ground of his acceptance with God. "Not of works, lest any man should boast." "It is by faith that it might be by grace." The merit of Christ is accepted by faith. Faith, in the very nature of it, disclaims all merit, and accepts the atoning sacrifice of Christ as the only ground of our acceptance with God. Because we were "*without strength*, in due time Christ died for us."

The doctrine of faith, then, is grounded upon the helpless depravity and corruption of the soul. In fact, the whole system of grace goes back to this.

It will be found, indeed, that loose views of this doctrine are often followed by a denial of the vicarious character of the sufferings of Christ, and a low conception of the turpitude of sin. All that is deepest and truest in Christian thought and feeling suffers.

Nor is it unfrequent that the divinity of Christ is denied by those who are in heresy on this subject. Indeed, I am not sure but this is almost uniformly the fact. If man is still able to help himself he does not require an Almighty arm to lift him up. If sin is not so deadly a thing, why should a divine Sufferer take it upon himself for us? So it is, that a departure from the truth of Christian doctrine at the starting point will lead the wanderer quite astray. He will miss the very substance of the faith. Divergence here is fatal.

A particular individual may miss the truth at one point and not perceive the logical direction of his own thought. But where the error makes headway amongst men, it will also make headway on the line of its own proper logical bearings. There is no point, therefore, more jealously to be guarded than this of which this article treats.

We are all gone astray like lost sheep ; we are

“Sprung from the man whose guilty fall
Corrupts his race and taints us all.”

There is no help in us. Our help is in Christ alone. Through him, by the ministration of the Holy Spirit, we are “made new creatures.” “He is our life.” “He alone is our salvation.”

Still another aspect of this topic demands consideration.

Chapter Eleventh.

I CAN not think that there is actual heresy among us upon the doctrine of human depravity. But that there are disturbing tendencies of thought in regard to it there is some reason to suspect. I do not by any means apprehend a doctrinal cataclysm, yet I have some fear that individual minds may overstep the boundary of truth.

The disturbing tendency originates, as I think, in two causes, mainly. These causes in themselves are harmless enough. Great truths are embodied in them both. But rushing on eagerly in the direction of a single truth many men plunge, ere they are aware of it, into absolute falsehood.

The first of the two causes I refer to is the discussion of the nature and functions of the will. Cultivated intellect is everywhere in insurrection against the dogma of *necessity*. Man is proudly asserting his freedom. The battle is won on every field. There is scarcely a voice raised in the domain of letters in the defense of fatalism. Whatever a man's

theological creed may be, he holds the proper freedom of will. He may hold it with reservations and explanations in the interest of an adverse theology. But still he asserts the essential fact.

There is no subject the metaphysics of which is more tempting than this, nor any of which the metaphysical intricacies are more complex or difficult. There are few men who can walk safely in this labyrinth. There is not a man on earth, there never was one, nor ever can be, whose conclusions may be implicitly trusted. Yet there are multitudes who imagine themselves capable of the explanation. Many half-educated men dogmatize here without hesitation. They discover some accidental cobweb, and taking it to be the veritable clew, follow it around two or three angles, and come back exultant. They have mastered the mazy network and know it all! The Bible may be mistaken, but their psychology never!

No man is more certain to fall into error than he who is self-confident. Nor is any man safe from blunders amid the intricacies of the metaphysical labyrinth. I do not mean that all philosophical inquiry is necessarily misleading, but I certainly do mean that no man can, at the end of an abstruse and elaborate course of speculations, rest in his conclusions with the assurance of faith. I mean that speculation can not stand as against the plain declarations of Scripture.

One thing was settled by me—settled for myself finally—that the Bible is the Word of God. From it there is no appeal. All speculation is at an end when *it* has spoken.

If, for example, from man's freedom my analysis should lead me to discredit the Pauline doctrine of depravity, I should very readily suspect my method, but never for a moment the truth of the inspired statement. Nothing could be more likely than that my analysis should be at fault, while it is a settled fact that the averments of holy Scripture are all true. My philosophy is open to review, but the Bible is not.

True, indeed, my interpretation of the Bible may be open to review, also. But the candid understanding of plain writing is rarely erroneous—it is not one-tenth so likely to be erroneous as the result of a review in the interest of a favorite philosophy. When a man begins to seek interpretations of plain Scripture that may be in harmony with a system to which he is committed, he is precisely in the mental condition least favorable to the perception of truth. Nothing more thoroughly warps the understanding than the prejudice of opinion. A revision of plain, common-sense interpretations with a view to get such a meaning out of the text as may correspond with the results of our speculations is dangerous in the extreme.

The most ingenious sophistry is requisite to eliminate the fact of hereditary depravity out of the Scriptures. Straightforward men of good sense and learning receive it inevitably. No man can doubt it, if he does candidly believe the Bible to be the Word of God, except upon an effort of an ingenious interpretation. These ingenious efforts of interpretation are always suspicious, especially when they are made with an eye to some private theory.

Of the freedom of the will as a general fact in Psychology, I have no doubt. But man's ability to be holy upon the motion of his own will alone is a doctrine against both Scripture and experience. He is not able to accomplish this until he is enlightened and aided by the Holy Spirit. A paralysis of his spiritual nature has resulted from the fall, from which he can by no means recover himself by any exertion of his unaided powers. The helping grace of the Spirit is not of the nature of mechanical force to compel a man to the service of God. It elevates him to the plane of freedom, simply, and leaves the responsibility of choice upon him.

My admiration of the Articles of Faith in our Book of Discipline grows upon me. On this point, of the freedom of man, as it is related to his religious character, the statement is marvelously condensed, and yet most satisfying and accurate. It is :

“ART. VIII. *Of Free Will.* The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he can not turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and works, to faith, and calling upon God; wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will.”

Grace, not compulsory, but prevenient and helping, is an essential condition of ability to please God.

He who takes the absolute freedom of will for granted as a universal postulate misses the fact egregiously, and will find his psychology at war with both fact and Scripture in a thousand instances. No phenomenon is more common than infirmity of will arising out of abnormal moral conditions. The limitation of freedom in actual life I can not discuss here. I have treated of it somewhat, though by no means exhaustively, in “The Work of Christ.”

But the tendency is apparent in some quarters, from the stand-point of the freedom of the will to drift away from the truth. Freedom, it is affirmed, is a fact of consciousness. So it is, indeed. So also is the infirmity of will, its actual imbecility in unaided spiritual efforts, a fact of consciousness. “When I would do good, evil is present with me.” “The good that I would I do not—the evil that I would not, that I do.” “O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Who is there that does not find in his own

experience a response to all this? If there be any they must be such as have never been quickened sufficiently to feel their chains. Sin has never become loathsome to them. They have never struggled for life.

Men are able to repent simply from the fact of the manifestation of the Spirit to them. Otherwise they are hopelessly lost and "without strength."

The Arminian theology harmonizes all the phenomena of consciousness on this point, and also brings them into harmony with the Scriptures. He who goes from the fact of free-will into Pelagianism ignores a large portion of the phenomena of consciousness, and many plain statements of the Word of God. The Eighth Article, quoted above, states the matter with the greatest accuracy.

The second fact out of which a disturbing tendency of thought has arisen on the doctrine of depravity is one most creditable to the Church of our day. I allude to the quickened conscience of the Church upon the duty of training children, and bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

It is a lamentable proof of the fact of the fall and the universality of its effect that, along with every good movement in human society, some incidental evil is sure to arise. Along with this new impulse in the Church, so exalted and pure, have arisen ques-

tionable views of the spiritual condition of infants—views that tend to loosen and demoralize thought upon the subject of the fall. So far as I know, they are not well defined, nor do I believe there is any conscious departure from the true doctrine. But postulates have been made in terms which, though unconsciously to the authors, are in the tone of erroneous teaching, and on the line of logic that ends and must end in Pelagianism.

That there will be any permanent divergence from evangelical teaching at this point, and arising out of this cause, I have not the slightest fear. The good sense and piety of those engaged most heartily in labors that look to the salvation of children will save them from any fatal departure from truth. If, in the ardor of speculation in early manhood, the pendulum of thought oscillates threateningly, it will soon settle into the attitude of truth by the inevitable gravitation of faith. The sincerity of a deep-felt conviction of the truth of the Word of God, and the light of their own experience and of the Spirit of Grace, will fix them upon the center. Years will bring them a deeper insight, and many fallacies that seem to them now to be unquestionable truths will waste away like the rime under an April sun.

But the relation of children to the covenant of grace and to the visible Church must excite much

interested inquiry at this period of Sunday-school activity. It is vitally connected with the fact of the fall and the doctrine of depravity, and I can not with propriety ignore it in this connection. The most that I hope to do is to guard the Church against any latent tendency which may be betraying itself toward fatal "error in doctrine."

The Church must put forth all her strength for the salvation of the young. She must not relax, but augment her zeal and her labors. But she must do it with a full and clear perception of the nature of the task. She must not "daub with untempered mortar." She must not treat a cancerous sore with such remedies as might heal a fresh wound.

Chapter Twelfth.

IF original sin is “engendered of the offspring of Adam,” of course infant children came into the world under the taint of it. But many curious questions arise out of their relation to the New Covenant. Some seem to infer that through Christ they are relieved at their very birth of the depravity which otherwise they had inherited from Adam. So far as I can understand it, those who hold this view consider infants as being in fact delivered both from the curse and taint of sin—both from guilt and depravity. The theory seems to be, that they are relieved of all the direct consequences of the fall until they commit actual sin.

From all which it is inferred that children may be so brought up as never to fall into sin, and never to forfeit their innocency. Upon this theory it must be held possible for men to pass through life faultless. If the atonement puts each individual exactly on the footing of Adam before the fall, then each individual has the same power to pass his probation without the commission of sin that Adam had.

To this theory there are several fatal objections. It is clear that the child is not on the same footing with the first man at his creation. That his relations to the law and government of God are as advantageous in the end, and with respect to his own destiny, I do not for a moment doubt. But that in every respect his attitude is *the same* as Adam's was at the creation, is certainly not true.

1. There is a vast difference of intellectual capacity and knowledge. The infant at first has no knowledge, and his capacity to acquire knowledge increases very slowly. In the first man knowledge seems to have been intuitive, as appears in the familiar instance of his giving names to the beasts as they came before him. The whole narrative implies a high degree of intelligence in the first man.

2. He was in intelligent intercourse with God. He conversed directly with his Maker. This shows an elevation of spiritual nature in most striking contrast with a little child. In the child the physical nature is strongly ascendant, the spiritual being dormant.

3. The first man was not under the doom of physical death until after he fell. "Unto dust shalt thou return" was not spoken to him until after he had sinned. Not until after that was the tree of life guarded from his approach.

4. The child now inherits the earth under the curse which doomed it to bring forth thorns and briers, yielding bread reluctantly to the sweat of man's brow.

I give these only as specimens of the differences between the first man before he sinned and the little child before it falls into conscious transgression. They will serve to show how vast is the disparity. The Atonement does not place the new-born babe just where Adam stood. The Cross may place him, upon the whole, and with respect to final results, in as advantageous a relation. But at first he is under many painful and humiliating disabilities. He is in a depraved condition.

As to the question, whether a child might attain to manhood and pass through his probationary term without sin, we are perfectly safe in saying that *none ever do*. "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and his word is not in us." The plague spot never fails to appear.

It is a great mistake to suppose that a child growing up may glide gently and easily into a holy life. Cross-bearing and self-denial are in every case essential incidents of Godly living. Natural propensities are never developed into holiness. They must be overcome. "The old man" must be "crucified with the affections and lusts." The "blank paper"

theory is contradictory alike of Scripture and experience. Our very nature is infected, and from childhood up “the leprosy lies deep within.”

But are not such as die in infancy saved? No one doubts that. Then, when is the dying infant regenerated?

I do not know, and for a very good reason. The Bible has given no definite information on the subject. But there will ever be a class of eager persons in the world who will never be content to let those questions rest upon which God has not spoken. His silence seems to provoke their curiosity. The question, as to when a child dying in infancy becomes regenerate, is of no practical importance whatever.

Two things are clear. One is, that those who die in infancy are saved; the other, that *all* who reach maturity early, betray depraved propensities. There are no exceptions. The strong statement of Scripture is scarcely hyperbolical: “They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.”

But you object that our Lord said, “Of such is the kingdom of God.” Certainly, then, they are not depraved, for the Savior would not have said that the kingdom of God was constituted of such as were depraved.

Upon this I remark, first: *That no isolated passages are to be so interpreted as to contradict the entire tenor of Scripture doctrine on any point.*

This is a uniform law of exegesis.

In all those passages which treat directly of human nature at large, and as it is related to the fall, and as it appears from our very birth, *the fact of our native depravity* is affirmed with a formality and emphasis that can not be denied nor questioned. Now, what our Savior said of children *when he was treating of other matters* is not to be interpreted to contradict the formal and uniform statements of the word of God *where it treats immediately of this question.*

The Savior would rebuke the worldly and vain ambition of His disciples. He sets a little child in their midst—a little child who knows absolutely nothing of such schemes. Here is one trait in the child which may illustrate a fact in the kingdom of God for instruction and rebuke to His wrangling disciples. In another case, parents bring their children to Christ, and are rebuked by his disciples, as if it were an impertinence to ask his attention to these “crying babies.” But He, “much displeased” to see how His disciples disparage the little children, bestows on them the most tender attention, and says, “of such is my kingdom.” Far be it from me to overlook them, for among them I find the very constituency of my kingdom. My blood is shed for them, so that if they die before the com-

mission of actual sin they shall be saved. Their angels behold the face of my Father.

There are, indeed, several traits in little children that most strikingly illustrate the Christian character. For instance, they are *single-minded* in pursuing their purposes. The trouble with us in serving God often is, that we do not pursue His service with a *single eye*. We adjust our conduct not wholly to the will of God, but partly to the expectations of our acquaintances. Or the attraction of wealth draws us into divergence from the right line of duty. The little child whose heart is set upon some object pursues it without any consciousness of observation. There is no more striking or beautiful illustration of the *single eye* with which the Christian is expected and commanded to follow Christ.

The feeling of confidence and love which a little child has toward its father illustrates more nearly than any thing else on earth, perhaps, the true feeling of the children of God toward him, the heavenly Father.

But underneath all this is the fact of spiritual depravity. These beautiful *natural* traits do not imply spiritual purity. There are many beautiful natural affections even among the lower orders of animals. But this is something very different from

a heart *right with God*. When a man has the true child-feeling, the genuine *filial spirit* toward God, he is a Christian. Yet, nevertheless, so little has the child himself this feeling *toward God*, that it is only by a slow and laborious process that he comes to know or care anything about God. In fact, when he does come to know of God and his will, he becomes also conscious of deep natural propensities adverse to his character and claims.

When the child comes to undertake a life of holiness, as he approaches maturity and gains some insight into the nature of God and His law, he finds both his own nature and surrounding conditions against the effort. He is himself depraved, and his life is cast upon depraved conditions. "The world" and "the flesh" are equally in league with "the devil."

So far from the nature of the child being pure to begin with, and as a basis of spiritual development, he is to find when he comes to some intelligent perception of the Christian life that *self-denial* is a prime condition of following Christ. Christian virtue is not the spontaneous outgrowth of "infantile innocence." Very far from it. *The old man is there, to be crucified, with the affections and lusts.*

True, there are facts in connection with childhood which render proper Christian training very effective.

The sensibilities are acute, and through them much may be effected. The young mind is credulous, and may be pre-occupied with the truth of the gospel. Indeed, if the Christian parent makes proper use of his advantage he will intrench the truth deeply and almost unassailably in the child's mind. Then there is the power and authority of the parent over the child. Where parental authority is properly established and maintained all the early years of life are wielded by the parent. In the most powerful manner the child may be thus turned and impelled toward a holy life.

The Christian training which goes upon the supposition that the child is good enough without being *born again*, that proceeds upon the idea of inbred purity instead of inbred sin, may make formalists, but it can never make true Christians. The transforming power of the Holy Spirit must be felt in the heart. Nothing short of this is to be taken for true religion.

I have no doubt that children properly trained may often be converted at so early an age that they may not be able to analyse the acts of consciousness, nor to know the character of the emotions of the new life. Such persons are often perplexed in after years by the clear-cut and often startling experience of those who had grown to maturity in sin. Yet no

matter how early the work may be accomplished, this work of the Spirit *must be done*.

The question is often asked, may a child be so trained as never to come into actual exposure to the wrath of God—never to lose infantile justification. May he not at the instant of sufficient intelligence exercise faith and be converted, thus passing immediately out of the state of infant irresponsibility into intelligent Christian life? I doubt not that this is possible—nay, that it is often realized. But none the less is the child *born again* at that moment than if the work had been delayed until he was fifty years old.

All Christian experience refers to a depraved condition. It is *salvation* realized in consciousness. It is deliverance from a sinful state. The child passing into the period of responsibility *must be saved*.

Chapter Thirteenth.

THE religious instruction of children must have the depravity of their nature fully in view. It is not enough to put them upon a course of religious observances and forms. They must have a distinct view of the nature of their wants.

The very fact of their baptism contemplates their need of the regenerating agency in the Holy Spirit. The baptismal prayer seeks it in their behalf. Baptism itself is the outward, formal expression of the inward cleansing wrought by the Holy Ghost. Unless the subject of it is in need of this, the ordinance is wholly without significance.

I may say, in passing, that I have met with some persons who were in perplexity about the baptismal prayer in the service for the baptism of infants, as if it contemplated their regeneration in the moment of baptism. The ritual is not open, upon a fair construction of the language, to this interpretation, though it must be admitted that it is liable to popular misapprehension, and I think some modification is, therefore, desirable. But an examination of the terms used will show that the prayer does not look

to regeneration as taking place simultaneously with the act of baptism. Besides this, it is to be interpreted in accordance with the uniform and universal teaching of the Church on this point. It is known publicly on all sides that our Church condemns and repudiates the fiction of baptism at regeneration.

But it is right to pray for a child that "he may be regenerated and born again," and eminently proper to offer this prayer at the time when he is receiving the rite which is significant of the fact. All that is done for a child in the way of Christian training looks to his regeneration, and, therefore, proceeds upon the supposition of a depraved condition. But it does not follow that all that is done looks to his being made actually regenerate at the time of doing it, and before he is at an age to exercise faith. In the event of his death before he reaches that age, the whole matter of his regeneration, of course, rests with God. We may not know when or how the gracious effect is realized. But we may be well assured that being involved in the effects of the fall without their own agency, they will be saved without any condition being required.

It is a false sentiment that feels disturbed and uneasy about children who die unbaptized. Sometimes people become feverishly anxious to have their children baptized when they are in immediate danger of

death. This betrays a wrong view of the case. It is not the children that die in infancy, but those that live to maturity that are benefited by baptism. It must be a pleasant reflection to parents, indeed, when their children die, that they were negligent in no duty toward them. But it is wrong to suppose that the child is any more secure or in any higher state, on account of its having been baptized.

The true significance of baptism in the case of children, is found in the fact that it is the beginning of a course of *Christian training*. The child is set, by parental authority, in "the way he should go," to be afterward "trained up" in that way. How can a child be "trained up in the way he should go," unless he is put in that way by those who are responsible for him in his helpless infancy? The way he should go is in the church, and among the people of God. Baptism places him formally in connection with the church. There he finds himself so soon as he can know good and evil. He is there upon parental authority, and if he leave his place it must be by his own perverseness. But he is there, not to be told that salvation is a necessary effect of his baptism and Church-membership. He is there to learn that he must be born again, and to be in the best possible circumstances to aid him in obtaining the gift of God. He is "matriculated in the school

of Christ'' to learn of him. The first thing he learns is the fact of his own lost condition, and that the Son of God has come into the world to save him.

The more distinctly he sees, and the more deeply he feels the evil of his lost condition, the more eagerly will he desire deliverance. He is not to be taught that he is a very pure little creature, and now has only to live right in order to please God, but, on the contrary, that all his evil tempers and unholy desires grow out of an evil and wicked heart, and that nothing but the mercy of God can save him. When the sense of sin is formed, the need of the Saviour will be felt.

The effort to bring a little child to Christ independent of this *sense of sin* is futile. It is philosophically the condition of receiving Christ as the Saviour. The *Saviour* can be consciously received only by the conscious *sinner*. As to the question whether the child may receive Christ at the very moment of passing the line of accountability, I should say certainly it is possible. The dawning sense of sin certainly antedates the beginning of accountability, and a well-instructed child may safely be considered as being prepared to receive Christ at the first moment of accountability. But he is so only on condition that a sense of his fallen estate has been previously awakened in him. Children will not be

brought to Christ by any course of training which ignores their sinful condition. I use the word *sinful* knowing well the just distinction between sin in the fullest sense of the word, and involuntary depravity ; the difference between what is technically called “ original sin ” and “ actual sin.” The involuntary corruption of the nature of an infant is far from being the same as the wicked act of the mature man. Nevertheless, it is a state of moral corruption, and is properly called “ original or birth-sin.” It is a sinful condition.

It is to be greatly regretted that so many amongst us neglect the baptism of their children. “ What good will come of it?” they ask.

Let your child know that by parental authority he is committed to the service of God ; that in faith and prayer he was offered up to the Saviour in the day of helpless infancy. The effect can not but be most wholesome. If he refuse to serve God, let him understand that he repudiates the covenant made for him by his father and his mother. The unbaptized child, if he lives in irreligion and out of the church, simply goes on in the way his life began. He follows out the logic of the position his parents gave him. The baptized child, on the contrary, if he live in irreligion and out of the church, must do so by a voluntary withdrawal of himself from the advantageous

position in which his father has placed him. He is shut up to a Christian course by parental authority, and he must *repudiate that* or lead a Christian life. The baptism of a child places him in a position that gives immense influence to Christian training. Upon it is based every appeal to filial duty and feeling in favor of early consecration to God. Tell a child, at the right moment, that his father and mother gave him to God, and lovingly bound him by their authority to be a Christian, and you shall see the effect it will produce.

Then it places him in a relation to the church which gives it great authority with him. He feels that he is identified with it, and committed to a life of piety and prayer. He may not dishonor the church. He feels that the church is his home, and that he is not of the world. That is, upon the supposition that the proper instruction has followed upon his baptism. In this relation to the church he is "brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Nor can this be done in the case of the unbaptized child who feels that he has no place in the house of God, or with the people of God.

But sometimes we are asked, what is the relation of baptised children to the church? Are they actually members or are they not? If they are members, then why not give them the sacrament of the Lord's Supper?

It seems to me that a little good common sense ought to enable any one to answer these questions. The membership of infants in the church is very much the same as the citizenship of minors in the state. The minor has many important advantages of citizenship, and is under many of its obligations. Yet there are important franchises which he can not be allowed to enjoy. He has not the requisite knowledge and discretion. For the exercise of them he must wait till he is of age. Until that time his citizenship is incomplete.

So with the children of the church. They are members. They are entitled to, and do actually enjoy many great advantages in the church. They are in covenant relations with God. But there are franchises of the church to be enjoyed, in the very nature of them, only by the conscious believer. They are not appropriate to the infant. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper, observed "in remembrance of him," can be participated in only by such as are of riper years and have actual faith. The baptized child has actual membership in the church, but his membership is incomplete.

At what age may membership be consummated? The Lord has not said; nor has the church prescribed the exact age. Much depends on the natural intelligence of the child, and more on the thorough-

ness of Christian training. There must be an adequate perception and deep sense of the solemnity, the binding character, and sacredness of the vows to be taken. There must be, also, some comprehension of fundamental doctrines. With this there must be a deep-felt and full purpose of consecration to God.

I should think that few ought to be received under ten years of age, and it is doubtful if in any case it should be done under eight. "Do not repress the children," some say. Certainly not. But they are in the church already. All I mean is, that they ought not to come to its highest franchises till they have some proper conception of the greatness of the benefit. They ought not to be hurried forward so summarily as to destroy or prevent a salutary impression of the sacredness of the privileges to which the consummation of their membership introduces them. Nor ought they to take the vows and assume the obligations of membership until they are of sufficient age to know what they do, and so well instructed as to take the step in the right spirit.

But the whole matter must be at the discretion of parents and pastors.

The church, I fear, fails in its duty toward children. They are not made to feel as they ought, either the privileges or obligations of their connection with the church. Many of them scarcely know the fact that they are members.

To make them feel the full import of their membership is an important fact in *training* them—in bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Chapter Fourteenth.

THE Wesleyan teaching, while it introduced no new doctrine, brought into new prominence and delivered with new emphasis four predicates, all of them having immediate reference to our personal salvation. The first is, that salvation is free for all ; the second, that it is attainable *now*; the third, that it is to be *consciously* enjoyed ; the fourth, that it provides for our cleansing from all sin. In other words, that salvation is *free—present—conscious—full*.

The new birth and the witness of the Spirit are the great facts of personal religion as given in the teaching of the New Testament. The two facts distinguish it broadly from ritualism on the one side and from rationalism on the other. It is not a matter officially managed by the church, nor are its phenomena the mere result of natural processes. It is the effect of the power of God realized in the soul. It is a new creation, the product of the present and felt energy of the Holy Ghost in the soul. That nothing short of this is salvation is distinctly

recognized in Methodist teaching. The testimony has been the same from the first. There is no hesitation, nothing equivocal on this point. The teaching of the pulpit has been sustained by the experience of the Church. The class-room and the love-feast have given no uncertain utterance. Salvation is a felt fact in the soul. God owns his people, and gives them assurance of his love.

If the faith of any is weak, if they consistently and earnestly seek God's face and yet remain in darkness, the Methodist Church has always offered them an asylum. It does not bar them from the sacraments, but, on the contrary, urges them forward in the discharge of every duty and the enjoyment of every privilege. It encourages their hesitating faith. It exhorts them to rest in the promises, and assures them of the great privilege of believers, to "know that they have passed from death unto life."

Nor does it prescribe the manner in which this assurance is to be reached. It comes by faith, but whether in these or those circumstances it does not say. It may be in the midst of revival excitement, sudden, overwhelming, and often is. Or it may come quietly upon the soul, like the silent dawn, "shining more and more unto the perfect day."

It sets great store by the practical evidences of personal religion. "It will be shown by its fruits."

A life of piety consistently maintained is accepted as a sign of the inward life. But the man is exhorted beyond that to seek and to enjoy communion with God and the witness of the Spirit of God with his spirit that he is a child of God.

This clear, assured experience of religion is the mark of a true church—as really and essentially as the true doctrine and purity of life. It is the true power of the church. Without it we are but as sounding brass or the tinkling cymbal.

The assurance urged among us is a *present* one. It dotes upon no recollections of a past experience and trusts to no anticipations of a dying miracle. It insists upon communion with God daily, hourly.

It has ever been felt among us that the salvation of the soul is not a matter to be attained by any half-hearted effort. There must be *full consecration*. God must become supreme over the individual soul. “No man can serve two masters.” All wordly affairs, all business and pleasure, must be subordinated to the will of God. The full soul must go out after God. He must be all in all.

That it is our privilege to be made “perfect in love in this life” was distinctly held by Mr. Wesley. It is recognized in the Discipline, though not in the Articles of Faith. It is a living truth and a power in the church that can never be lost. Men may

differ in regard to many particular points in connection with it. They may vainly attempt the metaphysics of the spiritual life, and fall into many disputes thereby. They bewilder themselves with a thousand subtleties. There will remain much upon which they will not agree. Some ardent persons will fall into unhealthy states of sentiment, and into fanatical errors upon the subject. Yet it will ever be found that the highest spiritual type is that which grasps the promises with a joyful assurance that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin." There will be hypocrites and blind pharisees every here and there, arising among them, who, by inconsistent courses, will cause the way of life to be evil spoken of. There will be many vain and boastful professions of such as will seem well only for a time. Yet the truest spirits in the church will yearn after and find the "fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ."

We must never cease to urge a *full consecration*. And what we urge upon others we must ourselves exemplify. A pulpit, single minded and wholly given up to God, is at once the sign of the highest state of the spiritual life in the church, and the agency of its perpetuation. The ministry that is worldly, carnal, vain and selfish will never lead the church into the green pastures and by the still waters of perfect love.

The flock can not be *sent* to pasture—it must be led.

A sound experience and a complete and perpetual consecration in the ministry is a great safeguard of doctrinal purity. The simple-hearted believer who thinks only of pleasing God and enjoying his love will scarcely be inventing ingenious sophistries in doctrine. The fact of his own sin, and of salvation through Christ alone, received by faith, and consciously enjoyed through the witness of the Spirit, will be his great and all-engrossing theme.

Nor will he mistake the relation of good works to the fact of salvation. That salvation is not obtained by good works, he will know by his own experience. He will know, also, that they are the fruit of faith, and that they enter into the life of the Christian *as an essential part of it*. The disposition and power to do good works are attributes of the new life. He will look to Christ with humble confidence as the only source of salvation, and at the same time rejoice to do his will, knowing that where the true spiritual life is, good works are the necessary expression of it.

Thus, doctrine and experience belong properly to each other. I do not say that a genuine experience will always bring with it correct doctrinal views in every particular, but I *do* say that it is wonderfully conservative of the essential doctrine.

Chapter Fifteenth.

IN a number of the London *Watchman* containing some account of the recent session of the British Conference, I saw the statement, that there was not in any quarter any sign of departure from the Wesleyan doctrine. The Methodist pulpit of Great Britain, it was affirmed, was perfectly sound. This was a most gratifying statement. The fact is, everything depends on doctrine, and just now, that such Rationalists as Froude, who have the popular ear, are laying out the full measure of their power to disparage doctrine—to set at naught all *dogma*—it is needful that we should study the situation, and see that all positive religious thought is not lost in the dim twilight of a speculative latitudinarianism. We must *take heed to ourselves* AND TO THE DOCTRINE.

The very substance of all religion is contained in doctrine. This is inevitable from the nature of the case. The truths of doctrine are the very essence of religion. Of these it consists. This is what the Bible teaches. A man *is*, in religion, as he believes.

A false doctrinal system may go to the length of actually eviscerating the Christian faith. Indeed this has often been, and is in many cases now, the fact. Many individuals and churches hold a creed that takes the meaning out of all that is most vital and truest in the Christian religion. God has committed the truth to us and we must maintain it.

A man who holds the office of a preacher in the M. E. Church, South, is fully committed, upon solemn pledges, to its doctrine. Before obtaining license he is examined upon doctrine in the Quarterly Conference; nor can he obtain license except the result of the examination be satisfactory. Upon being received into full connection, "after solemn fasting and prayer," he pledges himself, in open Conference, "to conform to the discipline of the Church." In the Book of Discipline, Chapter vi, Section 2, Question 4—Of the "Trial of a Traveling Preacher," we have this statute:

"What shall be done with those ministers or preachers who hold and disseminate, publicly or privately, doctrines which are contrary to our Articles of Religion?"

"ANS. Let the same process be observed as in cases of immorality; but if the minister or preacher so offending do solemnly engage not to disseminate such erroneous doctrines in public or in private, he shall be borne with till his case can be laid before the next Annual Conference, which shall determine the matter."

This statute classes false teaching with immorality,

showing what value the Church attaches to *purity of doctrine*.

The same law, in substance, holds in the case of local preachers. See Ch. vi, Sec. 5, Ques. 4.

But the Church is not satisfied with a mere negative attitude on the part of her public teachers on the subject of doctrine. Every Elder has promised in his ordination vow that he will “be ready with all faithful diligence to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God’s word.”

The necessity of putting a standard of doctrine in the form of a written creed embracing the vital doctrines of Christianity is evident from several conditions.

Nothing is more lamentable than those mental phenomena which indicate a depraved condition. I say *mental* phenomena, using the word in its proper sense as referring to the intellectual faculties. Of those phenomena, perverse interpretations of Scripture are among the most frequent and deplorable. We know that the monstrous doctrine of auricular confession is defended by the text which enjoins upon Christians to confess their faults one to another, and pray one for another. Universalists deny that the eternity of future punishments is taught in the Bible, whereas we know that the most formal and explicit

statement of the fact is contained in the Book. The ritualist professes to find baptismal regeneration there. One party fails to discover the doctrine of justification by faith, and another attempts to disprove by Scriptures even the Divinity of Christ.

Now, certainly the vital truths are taught plainly enough in the Christian Scriptures. There is no doubt of that. No uneasiness is felt on that subject. But in a Church that has not published a formal statement of the great doctrines, the audacity of ingenious heretics will set forth and defend all sorts of most monstrous falsehoods and follies, and pretend Scripture as a foundation. The unlearned and unstable will be bewildered by an elaborate network of sophistries. Every effort of the Church to silence such teachers would be a scene of debate and confusion involving endless logomachy, and distracting and rending the Church.

When a man delights in ingenious distortions of the Word of God (as some do) it is amazing with what voluble confusion he can darken counsel. The Church, with experience of mischievous heresies, has forestalled their blighting presence by a plain and brief creed. It is necessary to her own peace. It prevents endless strifes, and, what is worse, deadly heresies, from gaining a footing in the Church. The experience of a creedless Church has been tried more

than once. The results are a sufficient warning for all time. Purity of doctrine, with peace, can not be secured except by the aid of a written creed, serving as an authoritative standard of doctrine.

I have said that I do not apprehend a doctrinal cataclysm in the Methodist Church. Far from it. On the contrary, I rejoice in the integrity of doctrine which I see everywhere. Indeed, no preacher can teach heresy in the Church and remain an honest man. He violates the most solemn obligations if he does so. The integrity of his own character is destroyed.

The power of the Church is largely in a pure doctrine. We can not afford to suffer deterioration at this point. God will be with us as we are true to his word.

This is felt on all sides, and any tendency toward erroneous thought excites an alarm which gives an assurance of a most healthy tone prevalent among us.

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The work has been carried on since then until a large portion of it is now in type. One leading, if not *the* leading object, is, and has been from the first, to present and discuss some of the leading doctrines and some leading characteristics of Church polity held and pursued by the Church, as these were exemplified in the life and teachings of the Bishop. These will not spoil in the keeping; and now that all may know that no unworthy motive has prompted the writing, and no desire or wish to stand in the way of others, is entertained, and in view of the facts stated in the letter, we—that is the editor and the agent—do, of our own accord, and on our own motion, without conference or suggestion from any person whomsoever, here and now distinctly announce that, while we expect to carry the work to completion, we will withhold the publication thereof until the biographer and publisher selected by the family shall, in our sober judgment, have had full time to prepare their biography and place it upon the market, so that no one shall say we were in the way of any. We could have our work ready by the last of next month, but will withhold publication as here stated. We will, for the time being, step aside, nor throw the least obstacle in the way of the biographer and publisher, nor of the sale of their book.

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